Saml Buell 1783

USEFUL INSTRUCTIONS

for a profeſſing People in Times of great SECURITY AND DEGENERACY:

Delivered in ſeveral

SERMONS

on Solemn Occaſions:

Nath[ll] Hunting E dono amici Jos. Green 14 Aprel. 1695.

By Mr. *Samuel Willard* Paſtor of the Church of Chriſt at *Groton*.

Ezek. 3. 17. *Son of Man, I have made thee a Watchman to the Houſe of Iſrael: therefore hear the Word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*

Amos 3. 8. *The Lord God hath ſpoken, who can but Propheſy?*

Jer. 2. 31. *O Generation, See ye the Word of the Lord: have I been a wilderneſs unto Iſrael? a Land of darkeneſs? wherefore ſay my People, we are Lords, we will come no more unto thee.*

Haggai. 1. 5, 7. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Conſider your wayes.*

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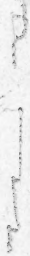

UMI

To his Beloved Friends the Inhabitants of GROTON.

THat it was not a deſire to appear in publick, but to anſwer your requeſts, gave light to the enſuing Sermons, ye are my witneſſes, and that in the publiſhing of them, I have not endeavoured to varniſh and paint them over with flouriſhes of men-pleaſing words; the thing it ſelf may ſpeak: in the reading you ſhall finde nothing but what was delivered in Preaching. Touching the occaſion of them I need not advertiſe you, you may well enough call to minde, the loud voice of ſpeaking providences, which forbad me in ſuch a day to be ſilent: The ſad hand of God which was upon the poor poſſeſſed Creature, which produced that on Iſai. 26. 9. hath ſounded through this Wilderneſs, but you were eye witneſſes of it; the Lord affect your hearts, and give you to learn righteouſneſs. The other two were alſo upon ſolemn Occaſions, the hand of God upon this Land, and us in particular, bids Miniſters to cry aloud; the Lord God hath ſpoken, who can but Propheſie? I know mans corruption is not willing to be cloſely dealt withal, but I hope many of you have not ſo learned Chriſt. My hearts deſire and prayer for you is, that you may be prepared for ſhaking times, and the nearer they approach the more need have we to be haſtened and rouſed from our loytering. If theſe poor labours of mine, may help in that great buſineſs, I have my ends fully anſwered; and my deſire for you is, that thoſe affections may be blown up again in the reading which were kindled in the preaching; I know I have but a while to be among you, if God pleaſe to make me by theſe, or any other weak endeavours, to be under him inſtrumental of your eternal good, I ſhall dye with joy; and ſo meet you all at the right hand of our Judge in that great day, is the higheſt ambition of

Your unworthy Miniſter.

S. W.

Jer. 7. 12.

But go ye now unto my Place which is in Shiloh, &c.

IN the beginning of this Chapter, the Lord sends by his Prophet, to call Judah and Jerusalem to *true Repentance*, encourageing them to it by a *promise of establishment* of their peace and mercies, in case they would so do. *ver. 1, 2, 3, & 5, 6, 7.* &c. That this counsell of his may take effect upon them, he endeavours to reclaim them from their vain confidence in their *external worship*, and enjoyment of the Temple and Ordinances, *ver. 4.* After which he enlargeth himselfe by a Declaration, of their hypocritical dealings, and false trust in the Temple, as if it were a sure safeguard to them from punishment, notwithstanding all their wicked abominations, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* which vanity, he declares to be a changing of a [illegible] of *holy worship*, into a *den of robbers*, *ver. 11.* and then gives them to understand that he takes notice of it: And in the Text further calls them off from their vain confidence by sending them to *Shiloh*, to take notice of his dealing with them for thir sins.

From the context, diverse Truths are Observable.

Doct. 1. *When God is never so much provoked with a people, He yet tenders them termes of peace, before he cutts them off.* In the three last verses of the former Chapter, he shews what they were; a rebellious and counsellesse people, on whom he had laid out much cost, to whom he had sent many messengers, who had spent their breath and lives to no purpose, and yet here again he sends an invitation to repentance, with a conditional promise of good; before he denounces the last sentence against them. The like we shall find. Chap. 6. 1. and 3. 1. and 18. 11. &c.

Reason 1. *From the great desire which God hath that sinners should live*: that he may verifie that truth. *Ezek. 18. 31.* That sinners may know where the true and proper cause of their destruction lies, that it is in *themselves*, and not in him; they shall not have the blame to lay upon God in the least, and therefore he proffers *pardon* and *mercy*, holds out the *flag of peace* before them, that if in the time of truce they will come in, they may, and welcome.

Reas. 2. *From the Attributes of mercy and long-suffering*, which discover themselves in withholding the stroak of vengeance, and holding his hand back. *Ier. 3. 12. 2 Pet. 3. 9.* God will have a time for all his Attributes to appear, now is the day of *mercy*, and now God will let sinners have large trusts of it, he *warns*, yea, follows on to *warne* and perswade with a people; that if it be possible they may escape

Reas. 3. *For the advancement of his glory by his patience*, God aims at himself, his own glory in all his doings: now by this Clemency of his he will gaine honour, either to his *mercy* in their *welfare*, or his *justice* in their *ruine*; which every way God will be a gainer hereby: if they *repent*, how will they magnifie his *patience and forbearance*: if they be *obstinate and perish*, how eminently will he clear his *justice* in their *ruine*?

Use 1. *This may convince us how unreasonable a thing it is to sin against God*: is God so unwilling to punish, so desirous to do us good, so ready to pardon us, who would sin against, and provoke such a God? bold, presumptuous, and horrible is that spirit of iniquity, that makes Gods patience and mercy his encouragement to sin; would we deal so by man, who would take encoucagement? to vex and anger one that is good and patient to us: that is the aggravation of their sin. *Psal. 106. 43.* their deliverances were the occasion of their presumption to sin.

Use 2. What encouragement is there here to us after all our *grievous sins* to return to the Lord by Repentance, God is yet ready to receive us, and restore his mercies unto us, and therefore let us be quickned up by this consideration. motive.

1. *Consider the wonderful self denyal that there is in God*, he needs us not, but could do well enough without us, being self-sufficient in himself, yea, hath Angels which attend upon him, and that he should accept of dust and ashes, much more unprofitable sinful creatures, and receive them into mercy; oh what a condescendency is this!

2. *Consider, the wrong we do him will fall upon our selves in the end*, we may fight against him, but they are arrows shot up against heaven, which will fall down upon our own heads. *Ier. 7. 19.* we may think what we will, but the issue of such provocations, will be the impenitent sinners confusion; *briers and thorns* must not think to thrive against a *devouring fire*.

3. Consider, *The benefits of Repentance will redound to our own good*,

Ier.

Jer. 7.5,6,7. we shall tast the sweet of it; to escape from misery, to enjoy the benediction of God, and sweet fruits of peace, will be our advantage: let it then break our hearts to consider, that after all our sins, God hath yet wid'ned arms to receive us into: *if a man find his enemies, would he not destroy them.* 1. Sam. 24.19. yet hath God had manifold opportunities and sufficient provocations, and hath not made use of them.

Doct. 2. *True Repentance is the best and only way for the settlement of true peace*: this the Lord propounds to them as the way and means to settlement, that they may dwell in that place for ever: and to that end he calls them up, not to a feigned, but a true repentance; if they had a desire to prosper. *Ier. 4.1. if you will return, return to me.* i. e. be sure to repent aright, do not turn from one sin to another, do not wander from that *mountain* to this *hill*, change one Idol for another; but go *back again to your God*: hence the Lord shews that to be the reason of the continuance of their sorrows. *Isa. 58 2,3,4.* and *Zech. 7.5,6.* they had pretended services, fastings, *&c. but they did it not to God*, it was not in a right manner.

Reas. 1. *From the difference between true and feigned repentance*, in the one there is a free and hearty renouncing of all sin: a sight of it, a sorrow for it, and a forsaking it; this the Lord himself hath constituted as the way to enjoy mercy. *Prov. 28.13.* this hath a firme promise made to it. *Isa. 1.19,20.* when as feigned repentance is a mocking of God, as the Lord declares, and therefore denounceth that threatning against it *Isa. 29.13,14. God will not be mocked* by sinners; that Repentance which God will only own and acknowledge, comes from a deep touch and sence of the bitterness of sin. *Ier. 2.19.*

Reas. 2. *Because it is only true Repentance which sets us in the way of true peace.*

1. God only is the Author of true peace. *Isa. 57.19.* if ever the creature be truly enstated in peace, God must speake it to the soule, though all the world should declare amity with the creature, yet if God do not set his seal to it, it is but a blank, and signifies nothing

2. Sin hath cut the creature off from the *right and true foundation of peace, what peace, &c. 2. King. 9.22.* God will not, cannot, pronounce blessings and peace to impenitent and hypocritical sinners; he would wound the great *Attribute* of his holiness, if he should so do.

3. It is only by true Repentance that we *heartily renounce* sin, and

under the condition of peace. *Ier.*3.12,13. God sets forth tenders of peace before vile sinners, but there are Articles of *composition*, terms of *agreement*, which the Creature must needs consent to, if he desire good, or otherwise the treaty must break off, and be put to an end.

Use 1. Here *see the dangerous estate of an obstinate people*, who refuse to hearken to the counsels of God; if once iniquity increase to obstinacy, and renounce repentance the only way of pacification, the condition of such a people is become desperate, *Ezek 14 13* as long as there remains any remorse upon the consciences of a people there may be some hope of them, because they are not without capacity of attending the way of peace, but if conscience be stupified, and the sense of sin obliterated, what hope can there be; and therefore as we would avoid utter ruine, have a care of adding obstinacy to all other sins, if we will yet repent there is hope, but if we are resolute our case is past hope.

Use 2. To direct us to a *right way of settling our selves in such a firm way of peace as shall stand*; let us forsake our sins and return unto God from whom we have turned away; though we have departed away from God into sin, yet let us not stand it out against him: *Motive.*

1 Consider, *Our league with Hell and Death will not do*, *Isai.28.18* we may go down to *Egypt* and ride upon Horses, but these shall not save us, *Isa.31 beginning*, though we should adde to own the strength of all the Creation, and engage the whole world in our quarrel, yet we must not think to be too hard for the Almighty, none ever tryed a fall with him but they were thrown.

2 So long as we persist in a way of sin *God hath a quarrel against us*, *Isai:57: ult:* wherever God finds wickedness there he stands off from the sinner; we may make flourishes of great matters in forms of Religion, &c: but if sin be still covenanted with, and we maintain our rebellion, the return will be, *who required these things at your hands?*

3 No peace like that whose *foundation is laid in true repentance*, for its a peace whose *Basis* is peace with God, and that gives peace with all things, *Job 5:19:* and its an inviolable peace, a league which can never be broken: Oh! labour we then after this peace, if we clap up a peace and God be not in it, be will disanul all that is done, but enter a covenant with him and the world shall never be able to overthrow it, Earth and Hell shall not prevail against it; let us then confess our sins to him, and cast our selves before him, and go with them, *Hos:14:2:*

Do[illegible]

Doct: 3 *True repentance is alwayes attended with a through reformation*: If ye throughly amend your wayes, &c *ver: 5.* the Lord there declares what a manner of repentance it is that he looks for; not a verbal, in a few empty Confessions, nor a formal, in a few dejected and cast down looks: like theirs in *Isai: 58: beginning* but here, and in the sequel he declares if they will have peace what it is he expects; the sum of which is, let all which hath been amiss be mended, turn over a new leaf, reform your hearts and wayes, your souls and lives, and that I will accept of.

Reas. 1 *Because such is the vile and loathsome nature of sin, that can't be indeed seen in its own colours, but it must needs be odious and abominable in our eyes*: It hath so much of contrariety in it, to the holiness of God, and so much vileness, and filth, and abomination that none can see it but must needs hate it; when sin is truly seen, it then appears to be sinful, *Rom: 7: 14*: that is the very worst name that can be put upon it, *viz:* its own: men see sin many times in its effects, and that frights them, but it cannot make them hate their sin, but they think it good enough if it had not such consequences, but when the face of it is uncovered and the souls eyes opened, now he stands off, his affections are slain.

Reas. 2 *From the Inconsistency of hating sin in the heart, and closing with it in the life and practice*: will we alwayes keep company, and hold intimate fellowship, and drive a constant trade and commerce with one, the sight of whom we loath; an unreformed life is a plain denial, and contradicting of all our verbal and professed repentance, *Tit: 1: 16*: if we live in sin it makes nothing to the credit of the world, much less to the allseeing eye of God to speak and profess against it.

Reas: 3 *From the nature of true repentance, which is a change from what we were to some other thing*; a change of affections, a change of profession, and not only so, but also a change of objects, a turning from the creature to God, *Jer: 4*: 1: now this implies a through reformation, when the creature casts off all other things which it hath pursued, and seek to God alone.

Use 1 This may call us to the Examination, *Whether ever we truly repented or no of those sins which we have so often confessed to God*, viz: *where is our reformation*? Search throughly one and another of us, remember what we have confessed, and with what shews of sense and sorrow, as if those sins had indeed been a burthen to us, and we desired to

be rid of them, but have they been amended, have we truly relinquisht them? if not, assure we our selves God looks at himself as mocked at all this while, and therefore if we be defective in this essential and substantial part of our repentance, never enquire or ask of God wherefore his hand is stretched out still against us, after so many Prayers and supplications have been poured out before him on solemn dayes:

The Reason is obvious and plain, and he that runs may read it:

Use 2 Hence therefore let this truth move upon us, *to perswade us, and to reclaim us from words to works; from profession to practise, from confession to amendment*: we have begun a good work in confessing, but if it go no further the work is spoiled; adde we therefore now to it, reformation, let us turn away from those sins we have drawn up so many protests against, and let us shew a practical hatred of what we have verbally renounced.

Doct. 4. *The best outward priviledges in the world, if once they come to be trusted in, are no better then lyes*; ver. 4. *trust not in lying words, the Temple, &c.* i. e. they have as great and grand a delusion in them, and as surely deceive any that place their confidence upon them as any other deceit in the world whatsoever: they are no better shelter, nor will afford any greater security and safeguard to the soul then any other vain hiding place; and therefore, they that trust in them trust in falsehood; a lye is that which is spoken to deceive the creature: thus when men speak of their priviledges, and rest on them, they deceive their own selves.

Reas. 1. *Because God gives his blessing with these priviledges but conditionally, i. e. according to the creatures improvement of them*; if they will make use of them aright they are a special benefit to them, otherwise not, 1 Chron. 28:11: and therefore positively and absolutely to trust in these, and not to carry a respect to the condition which is annexed to them, it is to neglect and abuse Gods order of blessing, who together with priviledges, promiseth good to the faithful improver of them, but threatens wrath, and denounceth his judgements against the abusers of it, and is therefore a great deceit.

Reas. 2. *Because the greater the blessing is, if not answerably improved, it brings the greater curse upon the Creature*: Mat. 11. 23. that is *Capernaum's* sin, abuse of Gospel priviledges, and therefore a special and extraordinary doom is past upon them; the greater the mercy is, the more sadly is God provoked by the abusing of it, and therefore

who

who ever escape, it's like to fare ill wich such as those. *Am.* 3. 2.

Use 1. *To reprove our carnal confidence in the enjoyment of the means of grace and priviledges of the Gospel*: you that trust in your interests you have Sabbaths, Sacraments, liberty of neareſt communion with God in his Ordinances, *&c.* and hereupon you are ready to think that God loves you, and will not bring a scourge upon you, but conclude your selves to be exempted from any danger of misery and desolation; let me tell you, *you trust in lying words, you leane upon such a prop as will certainly fail and deceive you in the latter end.* Consider, Jer. 9. 25, 26.

Use 2. *To awaken us to bethink our selves what use it is that we make of the means of grace which we have and enjoy, what good we get by the Ordinances*: think it not enough that we have and enjoy them; you have the temple of the Lord among you, the Word preached from Sabbath to Sabbath, and the Sacraments administred; these are high priviledges, but all the benefit is in the use of them, if we have them only to look upon, and boast off, and not to improve for our conversion to God, and help forward in his ways; they will become a snare to us in the end.

Doct. 5. *'Tis the great sin of a professing people, in the times of Apostacy, to cover their gross iniquity under the veil of priviledges and performances.* ver. 8, 9, 10. they thought if they did but come to Gods house, and perform a few Ceremonies there, offer sacrifices, *&c.* they might take the liberty *to steal, murder, sweir*, and what not; thus we read of that bold and impudent woman, who had not her name for nothing. *Prov.* 7. 14, 15.

Reas. 1. *From their presumptuous trust in their priviledges, as though God were bound to preserve his Temple*, he hath no other habitation in the world, and therefore he will never depart from hence, his glory is involved in our preservation, and will he laugh in our ruine; if he should destroy us, his name would be routed out of the earth, and therefore there is no danger that ever we should be cut off, or cast out; this was their presumption. *Mich.* 3. 11. *the Lord is among us, no evil can betide us*, and therefore *they steal, judge for reward, wrong the Innocent*; there is no danger.

Reas. 2. *From the secret Atheism and hypocrisie that is in the heart of vain man*, who thinks God takes no notice of their wickedness, but is deceived by their pretended services; men consider not *that God is all*

all seeing eye penetrates into all corners of the earth, and the secrets of the heart, and hence they think they may sin unseen. *Ezek. 8. 12.*

Use To *quicken us up to examine our selves, whither or no we are not going into Apostacy by this*; aske every one his own heart, can we not launch forth into any sin, do *violence, steale* &c. and yet go & stand before the Lord and say, *we are delivered to do all these abominations: Sin and pray, and pray and sin again, with as much greedinesse as ever*; come before God and make our confessions, tell him a large story of what sins we have been overtaken withall, and seem to beg his presence and help against it, as though we were willing and desirous to be rid of it, and yet go away, and strive no more against the temptation, nor set our selves in opposition against the sin then we did before; but entertain the same with greedinesse, the very next time we meet an opportunity and provocation, be as vain, as passionate, *&c* as ever; and when all is done, then come and rense them over again in few tears and empty confessions: and so wipe our mouths, and say, *what have I done*; if the matter be so with us, this is an evidence to us of the depth of hypocrisie in our hearts; well, let us look to our selves, we may thus please our selves into a vain hope and foul delusion, but let us know that God and our sins will find us out.

Doct. 6. *Hypocritical service is no better then robbery, pretended service to God*: to come reaking from our sins into the house of God to perform a few formal duties, and when we have done, to go thence again with more greedy desires after it; what is this, but to turn *the house of God into a den of Robbers.*

Reas. 1. *Because God is hereby robbed of that glory which is due to his Name*, who requires hearty service; which the hypocrite offers up to the Idol of his heart, and not unto God; he gives that glory which is alone due to God, to his *graven Images*, to his own by ends and aims; God requires *the heart*, because he knows that that is the leader of all the rest of the faculties, and it is his due, for he made it; but the hypocrite steals the best piece of the sacrifice from God, and is not this Robbery.

Reas. 2. *Because the sinner hereby robs himself of all the good which he should otherwise get by his service, if it were done in sincerity.* Ezek. 14. 7, 8. God hath made great promises to sincerity, in manifold expressions in Scripture, but he denounceth sore woes upon hypocrites, destructive desolation and ruine; so that it is time lost, and rooting our selves out from good.

Use

Use *To condemn that spirit of hypocrisie which is ready to seize upon our hearts*, will you give entertainment to secret sins, and forsake God in your hearts, live in a way and course of disobedience, and yet here come before God in solemn and serious duties, as though you were good Christians, God looks upon you as no better then *a company of Robbers*, you do at the present *rob him of his glory*; but, assure your selves, he will not be a looser by you, the time hastens when he will come and recover his honour out of your hands: and you rob your selves of all the good you might get by such opportunities as these; oh! if such duties were done in truth and sincerity, they would bring in a plenteous harvest; fasting days would be our best feasting days, God would both accept of us, and also crown us with admirable blessings; but if we will come with an Idol in our hearts, cry out against such sins as we bear an entire love unto, confess those evils we never intend to leave off in our course, assure we our selves we shall be found the greatest self Cheaters in the end.

Doct. 7. *God takes notice of, and will find a time to punish the wickedness of a sinning people*; for both these are understood in the words *ver. 1. I behold it, and will requite it*: so *Psal. 35. 22, 23.*

Reas. *From the Attributes of Omniscience and Iustice.*

1. *God knows all things*, nothing can escape his sight, because his eye is every where. *Pro. 15. 3.* he knows all things, even the secrets of the hearts of men, for he made them, every room and corner of them; he therefore keeps a key to them, he must needs be Omniscient, for he is Omnipresent in all places, by his essential presence; intimate with all things: *Acts 17. 28.*

2. *He observes all things*, and there is reason for it, because he administers the affairs of the whole world; *Psal. 33. 13, 14, 15.* All actions of the creatures in the world flow as to their principle from him, and therefore he cannot but take notice of them.

3. *He will requite, for he is just and cannot but give them their demerit*, Jer. 5. 29. he is the judge of the whole world, and therefore must be just, he is the highest and supream judg, beyond whom there is no appeal, and therefore had need be just; yea, he is engaged by his Word to do justice and execute judgment upon sinners for their sins.

Use 1. *To shew us how vain a thing it is to go about to deceive God with vain services*, whiles our heart is estranged from him; if we had to deal with man like our selves, we might easily cast a blind before their

eyes,

eyes, and make them believe ſtrange matters, but God who can in no ways cheat or deceive, though we cover our ſervice with a cloak of deceit, yet God can tell us whether it be alive or dead; and if we go about ſo to ſerve him, he will make us to know ſooner or later, that he took good notice of them in the day when he comes to ſet our ſins in order before us, and tell us this we did at ſuch a time, and that abomination at another time: *See Pſal. 50. 18. &c.*

Uſe 2. *This may certifie the ſinner, that God will take a time to reckon with him*, the alſeeing eye ſees thee, and cannot chuſe but take notice of thee, and he will call thee to an account, though he may ſeem to wink at preſent and not to take notice of thy wayes and doings, but to let thee alone; yet *I* promiſe thee time will be when thou ſhalt know it to thy coſt, that he is not ſuch an one as thou art, nor did ever give his conſent to and approbation of thy wayes and doings: and therefore is there any here that lyes and lives in ſin; deceive not thy own ſoul, but let it awaken thee to look about thee, and make thy peace with God, for otherwiſe *what he hath ſpoken he will performe*, he will not come ſhort of his threatnings any whit more then his promiſes, let then that counſel be acceptable. *Am. 4. ult. meet God with Repentance*, before he meet us with his heavy plagues But I come from the Context to the words of the Text: God having counſelled and warned them; the further to awaken and effect their hearts, and preſerve them, ſets a lively example before them: in every way ſuiting and anſwering the preſent ſtate of *Ieruſalem*, he therefore ſets it forth. 1. By the title it once bare, the place *&c.* 2. By the evils which were brought upon it: where, 1. The author, God himſelf: what I did. 2. The procuring cauſe, *the wickedneſs of my people Iſrael*: Hence.

Doct 8 *The example of Gods judgements upon his own people for their ſin and wicked Apoſtacy*, are very uſeful and ſolemn conſiderations for all profeſſors of Religion; the Lord ſends *Ieruſalem* to *Shiloh*, and for what end, only to ſee, what he did, and for what, to view his judgements in their cauſes and effects; to ſee, *i. e.* not only to look on, but to conſider them ſeriouſly, and to make uſe of them to themſelves; and learn ſomething from it for their own conviction, by comparing caſes together.

The ground of the truth we may underſtand if we conſider a few propoſitions: viz.

1. *God hath one rule of dealing with all his externally covenanted*

people

people in the world, and that becauſe the covenant with them all runs upon the ſame terms and conditions, for it is a conditional Covenant; in the which there is a promiſe and a threatning, a promiſe annexed to obedience, but a threatning denounced againſt diſobedience. *Iſa. 1. 19, 20.* It is true, God reſerves a ſoveraignty to himſelf as to the circumſtances of his dealings with his people in one place or in another; without either infringing his Covenant, or rendring to the creature a Reaſon of that variety; hence, poſſibly patience and mercy may longer wait upon ſome then others, ſome God may come ſeverely out againſt, for breach of Covenant, and to others he may condeſcend to allow a greater ſpace to repent in, as he pleaſeth, and he does not the leaſt wrong or injury in ſo doing, becauſe he is both ſupream, and hath ends in all his judgements, beyond the capacity of the creatures finding out; but, as to the eſſence of the Covenant, he thus far ſtands poſitively and abſolutely engaged to reward obedience, and to puniſh diſobedience; which flows from his everlaſting righteouſneſs.

2. *Examples of Gods judgements upon his own people for their ſins, are evident confirmations and teſtimonies that he is a God who proceeds impartially according to his own Rule*; as when Laws are executed according to the tenor of them upon malefactors in the Kingdome, we now know that ſuch Laws were not meer ſcare-crows, made only to fright, but not to hurt, but that there was reality in the Law-makers, and that they were really ſet againſt ſuch evils to ſubvert and root them out, and may teach others to expect what to meet with, in the like caſes: ſo, when God puniſheth ſin in his people according to his threatning in his word, we now ſee that thoſe threatnings are realities; that his orders and conſtitutions are not bug-bears, but realities, that ſin ſhall not go unpuniſhed. Hence God declares in his word, that he will be known to be God in his judgements. *Exek. 28. 22.* if men will not believe the word, that God will do as he hath ſaid, but preſume upon his mercy and patience; when he takes his rod into his hand, now he is mad, that believs not.

3. *Hence, Examples have matter of precept in them.* Gods judgements are documents, there are doctrinal concluſions to be drawn for our inſtruction out of them, hence, we ſhall find God in Scripture calling upon his people to look upon Examples. thus, *Luk. 17. 32. 2. Pet. 2. 4, 5, 6* &c. If God have thus dealt with ſuch a people, we may thence conclude he will deal ſo with thoſe that are ſo qualified, if

we

we enjoy the ſame priviledges that Iſrael did, and make no better uſe of them then they made of theirs, we may expect to be viſited as well as they were, and not only may we argue *a pari*, but alſo *ab impari*, from the leſſer to the greater; if Iſrael ſo priviledged were not ſpared; how much leſs ſhall we be ſpared, who exceed them in priviledges, if ſinners *under the Law* found no favour, *how much ſorer puniſhment* may ſinners *under the Goſpel* expect: God writes his *ſevere truths* with the *blood* of his *diſobedient Subjects*, and makes their ruinous heaps to proclaim knowledg and counſel to the reſt of the world: *Sodom's aſhes*, *Shiloh's fire*, *Ieruſalem's deſolation*, are uſes of inſtruction to the Inhabitants of the Earth.

4. *Examples are of wondrous benefit to give efficacy to Doctrines*, and move upon the affections, and bring them to conſideration, they are uſeful to perſwade; and to move the ſoul to make out after God: *Pſal. 78. 6, 7, 8.*

1. *Becauſe there is a natural ſympathy between the children of men*, there is a kind of a fellow feeling of ſufferings; when we read only of Doctrines, theſe may reach the underſtanding, but when we read or hear of Examples, humane affection doth as it were repreſent to us the caſe as our own; whereupon the judgements of God, do in the very hearing dwell upon the thoughts, and take upon the heart: when I read the ſtory of *Sodom's overthrow*, me thinks I ſee the Sun riſing in glorious brightneſs, the *Sodomites* ſporting and pleaſing themſelves in their *opulence and ſecurity*; when on a ſudden, me thinks I ſee the heavens covered with thoſe ſable clouds, and hear the great Cannon of heaven thundring down tempeſts upon them, and the ſtreams of fire with horror and dread, till I behold a proud City, on a ſudden become a *deſolate heap*; when I read *Ieruſalems hiſtory*, me thinks I ſee the battering Engines placed againſt the walls, the proud enemy climbing up the battlements, the feeble and faint-hearted Citizens flying into corners, overtaking by the inſulting foe; who without mercy or pity ſheaths his ſword in their bowels; me thinks I ſee the fire-balls flying too and fro, and the glorious buildings, the work of many years, yeelding to that prevailing and mercyleſs enemy, I hear the cries of raviſhed virgins and bereaved Orphans, yea, I look on till I ſee all Gods threatnings fulfilled, and the glory of the Nations ſtript of all ornament and become a widow, *&c.*

2. *Becauſe examples come in by the ſenſes, and theſe have a great*

ſtroake

stroake to move the affections, and they perswade the heart of man. *Lam. 3. 51.*

3. *Because Examples have an awakening voice in them*, when judgment comes into the world, it carries awe with it, it sensibly moves the soul to have consideration; such as these are natural influences upon the heart of such as have any remainder of an acting conscience in them. *viz.*

1. *Why may not the same judgments befall us*, what grounds have we to promise our selves security, and immunity from the same plagues & miseries which are upon others.

2. *Hereupon they put the creature in mind of its ways and doings*, what they have been; now *conscience*, if it be not *altogether seared and benummed*, reads the creature a more close and severe Lecture then usuall, now those sins that he had before lived in forgetfulness came afresh into his memory.

3. *Hence they are to put the creature into fear of the same wrath and terror*, as Scholars, when they see their Master take the rod in hand, to punish offendors; every one presently considers what his faults have been, and if he have been tardy, he stands quivering, and quaking, fearfully expecting when his time and turn will come to be called forth.

4. *Now the soul is put upon the study and consideration how to prevent and escape severe and like plagues*, now he bethinks himself of making his peace of coming and seeking a pardon; for fear least by obstinacy he bring himself to ruine.

5. *Now the creature is alarm'd to Repentance*, he had calls before, but those he regarded not, but now he sees there is no longer delaying and playing with the threatnings of God, and now, if ever, is the soul in a likely way to be reclaimed.

Use *Of counsel and exhortation to us*, in the words of the Text, *go to* Shiloh, *&c.* In the prosecution of which use, I shall.

1. *Bring you to* Shiloh, *and shew you what God did to it, and for what*,

2. *Draw some useful instructions from the consideration of* Shiloh, *and press them in a few words of counsel.*

1. *Then, go to* Shiloh: *and here consider*,

1. *What* Shiloh *was*,

2. *What were their sins*.

3. *Gods judgments on it*.

1. *What* Shiloh *was*, we have it in the words of the Text in two things.

1. *It was Gods place*: i. e. *a peculiar place* which he had chosen to himself, *his chief place*.

2. *It was the place where God set his name at the first*: i. e. It was the *first Tent*, or *Tabernacle* where God set up his Ordinances, and called his name upon it, after he had given to *his people Israel possession of the land of Canaan*: as we shall find in *Joshua 18.1.* here it was that after the *Arke* had been unsettled for 40 years and upward in the *wilderness*, God first chose it a fixed place, here was God *worshiped* first after he had granted a settlement to his *people Israel*. The Tabernacle was a *Testimony* of Gods presence with his people, *hither the Tribes came up to worship*, here it was that God manifested his *great glory*, by this it was that God declared Israel to be *a peculiar people* to himself, so that *Shiloh* was not only a part of *Gods dwelling place*, for so were all the *Tribes*, nor only a habitation of Gods people, for so were all other Cities, *Towns* and Villages where Israel dwelt, but it was the place of Gods manifesting himself to his peole, *his especial habitation*.

2. *What was the wickedness of* Shiloh; for the Lord shews that it was for that, that he did that to it, which he had done; *Text*, now we shall see the sin of *Shiloh*, if we look into *1 Sam. 2.12.* &c. which was the sin of the Priests in contemning the Ordinances of God, giving an evil example to the people, and enriching themselves in a way of abuse of Gods Institutions, and thereby discouraging the people from serving of God, and of *Eli* in bearing with the wickedness, and not severely punishing the sin of his sons, which God interprets as a preferring them before him. *ver. 21.* &c. and *Psal. 78.41.* to *60.* where their horrible ingratitude in forgetting Gods mercies, and woful Idolatry is declared: this was Israels sin, the Priests and people were polluted and defiled, and alienated from God; there was a continuance of Ordinances and sacrifice, but both abuse of Ordinances and Idolatry, both in profession and practise.

3. *The judgments of God upon his people Israel*, and upon *Shiloh* in particular: we shall find recorded in scripture, what God did to it; for that is the thing which God would have in especial be minded, look into *1 Sam. 4.10.11.*: where you shall find the judgment denounced, and more amply we shall read of the execution of it in *Psal 78.59.* to *68.* where we have described unto us, the effects of their sins.

1. *In alienating of Gods affections from them*, turning of his former

mer love into hatred, *ver. 59.* God had formerly loved Israel, they were to him a choice people, tender as the apple of ones eye, tenderly taken care for, and foltered by him, protected from evils, dandled in the lap of his providence, and singularly respected by him; as we shall find amply related to us in *Deut. 32.7,* &c. But now his heart was hardned against them, and his former love turned into abhorrence and detestation.

2. *The consequents following upon this,* or the tokens whereby God signified and expressed his displeasure unto them, which are.

1. *God departed and forsook them,* even his own house, not only the other Cities, of Israel, but even his own tent at *Shiloh, ver. 60.*

2. *When God had left them, all miseries followed,* ver. 61. *&c.* their crown was taken from their head, and their enemies which formerly were tributary to them, now lord it over them, yea, an universal deluge of miseries came upon them, as you may there read. Thus you see *Shiloh,* once chosen by God, where he set up his Ordinances, made his name to dwell, and shone forth in his wonderful glory: forsaken by God, and buryed in its own ruines, altogether disowned and refused as a place of abhorrence and contempt.

3. *Let us consider what we may learn at* Shiloh, observe here even from the consideration of this example.

1. *That God hath no where on earth so engaged himself and his presence, but that sin may drive him away:* where was his name greater then at *Shiloh*; there was the *Tabernacle,* there was the Priests and Levites serving, there were daily morning and evening sacrifices, thither came the tribes yearly to appear before God, there were the seals of Gods Covenant, yet is *Shiloh* deserted and destroyed; *Ierusalem* may also witness this truth, the once dwelling place of God, where the *Temple* was, the place whereof God had said, this is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it. *Psal. 132.14.* but now behold it deserted and twice made the subject of Gods fury, and not so much as the ruines of it left to testifie what it was, *a stone not to be found upon a stone*; hence therefore learn we not to promise our selves security if we be found in the ways of sin, whatsoever engagement and covenant God may seem to stand bound in unto us, God knows how to keep up his glory in the world, though we be ruinated, he can keep up a Church in the world, though we be left desolate; the stones of the field, if he but speak the word, shall rise up children of *Abraham*; the remotest

ends of the earth ſhall come in, and the children of the Kingdom ſhall be thruſt out; let not this therefore be your reſt.

2. *That Sion affords no more ſecurity to ſinners then* Sodom, Shiloh is as dangerous a place to ſin in, as any in the world; if a people in covenant with God, be found rebellious, he will ſpare them no more then any other people, nay he will begin with them. *Am.3.2. judgement ſhall begin at his houſe*; Shilohs ruines are a memorial of this, and declare how vain it is to take ſanctuary in the *Tabernacle*, and ſhreud our ſelves from judgment under pretence of Gods covenant; *Ieruſalem* ſmarted dearly for this ſin, if *Ioab* be a man of death, it avails him not to take hold of the *horns of the Altar*:

Learn we therefore from hence, to beware to our ſelves, how we make bold to ſin, and think the Covenant ſhall ſave us; if God find us rebellious, & bold ſinners, though we ſhould hide our ſelves in the *Temple*, and take refuge under the pretended ſhadow of Gods promiſes of favour and love to us, God will yet find us out, and will not ſpare us; whatever they plead for themſelves. *Mat.7.21,22.* yet Chriſts anſwer ſtill is, *I know you not*; I tell thee, when God ſhall come forth to execute his judgements upon ſinners, thy church-membership, thy priviledges ſhall not ſave thee, God will no more regard thee for all this then if thou wert an *Indian*; except it be to puniſh thee the more, becauſe thy ſins have therein been greater, and more hainous: if ſuch pleas could have prevailed, who could have pleaded more then *Shiloh*? and *Ieruſalem*.

3. *General Apoſtacy makes way for general calamity*, learn this in *Shiloh*; the Prieſts violated Gods Ordinances, and the people they provoked him with their Idols, and then ſee the effects. *1 Sam.4.10,11.* Iſrael is ſmitten, *30000 ſlain*, the Ark loſt, *the Prieſts ſlain*, read this alſo in *Ieruſalem*. 2 Chron.36.15,16, *&c.* hence therefore what greater requeſt can we leave with God this day, than this, that he would prevent our general decay in grace, and to that end, that he would reſtore the fallen, prevent the backſliding, and ſettle his own, that mercy may be ſettled among us; pray for rulers in Church and Commonwealth, that they may do right, and give good examples, and for all the body of people, that ſin do not grow and encreaſe among them; if once we ſee a ſpirit of prevailing corruption ſpreading it ſelf among us, we may read leading ſymptomes of deſtruction & miſery, & therefore may be rouſed up to ply the throne of grace, that ſuch ſad cauſes may be

removed,

removed, and ſo our eyes may not ſee the natural direfull effects that flow from them,

4. *Lenetie in Rulers, brings ruine upon a people*, whether in Common wealth or in Churches: Rulers may be good men in themſelves, ſo was *Eli*, but if they give way to ſinfull forbearance in the executing of Juſtice according to the will of God, they are not occaſions onely, but leading cauſes to the undoing of a people, becauſe ſuch a ſpirit animates wicked ſpirits, and makes them bold to do perverſely upon preſumption of a pardon, or to be paſt by with ſome gentle reproof; God chargeth *Shiloh's* deſtruction upon *Eli*, who was *judg in Iſrael*, and when his Sons the *Prieſts* did wickedly, he connives ſo far, as only to rebuke them, who being gotten beyond remorſe or ſenſe of reproof abuſed their Fathers patience, to add to their Rebellion; therefore muſt *Shiloh be laid waſt*.

Hence therefore, let this teach us to pray unto God, to *put a Spirit into our Rulers, Zealous againſt Sin*, eſpecially in theſe times of prevailing iniquity; and let us, in our place incourage them in ſo doing, by rejoycing in acts of Juſtice and ſeverity, againſt ſuch evils as grow and thrive among us: Pray that they may not reſpect perſons, nor encourage ſome in ſin, by ſparing others; eſpecially remembring, that as long as ſuch a ſpirit is in Rulers, what ever ſins there be in a people, there are ſtill ſome to *ſtand in the Gap*.

5. *The greateſt Mercys abuſed by ſin, give God the higheſt provocation* God recounts what he had done for them, and what they had done againſt him, *Iſrael ſinned grievouſly*, after ſuch and ſuch favours, and when *God heard this*, when this was the report brought him of the improvement that they had made of all his mercyes, this brings them into abhorrence: and good reaſon there is for it, for every mercy is an *obligation laid upon the creature to obedience*; hence the greater the mercy is, the ſtronger tye lyes upon the creature; to ſin therefore againſt *mercy, grace*, and *ſpeciall mercyes*, is to break Gods ſtrong *cord of Love*, then which, what greater provocation can there be: Conſider *David & Hanun*, 2 *Sam.* 10. Ingratitude in return for friendſhip, is the moſt hard to bear of any thing. Aske we then our own hearts, what uſe we have made of all thoſe great mercies which our God hath beſtowed upon us: great favours we have had, equal with thoſe he had ſhewed to his people at Shiloh; yea, if all things be conſidered, we may well ſay, Superiour unto them, in as much as the dayes of the Goſpel

afford far greater light, then the dayes of the *Law* did; and have we remembred what God hath done for us? so as to make our returns unto him; hath he had his *tribute of thankefull Obedience*? have we lived up to our enjoyments? have we been *singular in holineſs*? as we have been ſingular in the *means of holineſs*; or have we not rather grown vain and looſe, and prophane? deſpiſing of the meanes, and hardening our hearts againſt the *Counſels of God*? if it be ſo with us, *Go to Shiloh*, and tremble.

6: A People forſaken of God are in the road way to all miſery: we read, God forſakes his Tent *which was in Shiloh*, and what follows, *but ruine and waſte, and an univerſal deluge of deſtruction*: all woes follow when he is gone, *Hoſ. 9. 12.* and reaſon there is for it, for his favour is the life of a people, his protection is their only defence; well may it therefore be ſaid of a people, deſerted by God, their rock hath ſold them into the hands of miſery: fear we therefore to provoak God to leave us. Conſider,

1. *All our bleſſings are in his hand, he holds us at his diſpoſe, if any people in the World, then to be ſure* we are at Gods proviſion, who have no ſtore but what his yearly bleſſing brings in unto us.

2. *Sin will provoke him to leave us*, for he is a *God of purer eyes then to behold iniquity, i. e.* with love, liking or approbation; his holineſs engageth him to manifeſt ſignal diſcoveries of the contrariety which he hath againſt ſin.

3. *If when he repoves our ſins, we harden our ſelves in them, it is a ſure ſigne that he is forſakeing of us*, Jer. 7. 28. Have we therefore given to God any provocation to unſettle himſelfe, an think of a removall away from us: Oh let our repentance fetch him back and ſettle him.

Laſtly. *It is a fearfull thing to fall into the hands of the Living God*: The Charracters of Gods wrath, & impreſſions of his Judgements remaining upon *Shiloh*, teach us this Leſſon: If God come once to abhorr a people for their ſins, and fall upon them in his Judgments; he meets them not as a man, but gives them a *Divine ſtroak*; if he be angry, his very countenance is terrible and amazing. *Pſal. 18. 8 &c. Hab. 3.* what is he then, when he poures out his diſpleaſure: Labour wee then from the example of *Shiloh*, to *fear and dread* provoaking the great God to wrath againſt us: what ever cauſes moving to this occaſion, are in Gods goodneſs removed away from us, yet the remembrance of our ſins is matter ſufficient to humble us before God this day;

Better

Better it is for us to bow our ſelves before him, leſt he break us in pieces: and therefore let it be our great endeavour to meet God in the way by Repentance, before he come home to us in wrath, and fall upon us in his ſore diſpleaſure; let that be the great practical leſſon that we learn at *Shiloh*. For motive:

1. Conſider, *God will not bear with ſin, let him find it where he will*: He is no reſpecter of perſons, *circumciſed, or uncircumciſed, if uncircumciſed in heart*: Jer 9.25,26. if he find it in Church, or Commonwealth, in Rulers, or Subjects; where he finds it, he will puniſh it.

2. *God is yet willing to be met with Repentance*, we have many ſigns and tokens of Gods deſire rather that we ſhould live then dye, hence hath he drawn out his long ſuffering to ſo long a thread as he hath done; by following with counſels, and piece-mealing out his judgments.

3 *There is all Reaſon we ſhould acknowledge and repent*, we are not able to give a good Reaſon, only we have ſinned againſt him, that was unreaſonable: *Ier. 2 5.* and if ſo, then needs muſt it be Rational, that we ſhould ſee the evil, and take the ſhame to our ſelves of ſuch unreaſonable doings.

4. *If God once take us in hand, he will be known, and make us to know too, how ſad and miſerable a thing it is for us to enforce him to cut us off*; *do we provoke him to jealouſie*, do we not rather provoke our own ſouls to ruine: Oh remember! remember! if we have made him our adverſary by ſin, he is yet in the way, though he may be coming in judgment, yet he waits to be gracious he hath waited long, *turn not his patience into fury*, why ſhould we be made like unto *Shiloh*: God is mercifull, true, but he is juſt too, and he can make his wrath known, ask *Shiloh* elſe, and they can tell you a ſad ſtory of it: Look on *Shiloh*, Look on *Ieruſalem*, look on the multitude of *deſolate Churches*, and take warning by theſe to fall down before God, to receive his reproofs; *if you be wiſe, be wiſe for your ſelves*; turn to him, *for why ſhould ye dye?*

Iſaaih

ISAIAH. 26. 9.

When thy Judgements are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousnes.

THis Chapter is a Song, Celebrating *the Praysse of God*, in his Judgments on his Enemies, and favours to his People; and is full of Spirituall matter.

The Song is appointed to be Sung by *the Faithfull at their deliverance from the Babilonish Captivity.* In this 9th *verse.* The Church Declares;

1. *Her own Frame under the* Judgements of God: namely an *Earnest and early Desire* after him: *In the night,* Signifies in the darke and gloomy *times of affliction*, when they were under the *Tyranny and Captivity* of the Enemy, shut up as it were in darknes.

2. *What should be the Frame of all that see or hear of Gods terrible doings in the world,* it should teach them *Righteousnes*: of which latter we may at this season make some improvement; and a little to open the Words.

[*When thy Judgments:, &c.*] Judgments are Acts of Divine *Iuſtice, Vindicative*, all Gods diſpenſations to the creature, are called either acts of *Mercy* or *Iuſtice*; Not as if there were a contradiction in theſe two; God is Juſt where he is Mercifull, *i. e.* his being mercifull doth not infringe or wrong his juſtice at all: and where God is Juſt, he is Mercifull alſo, in this world; becauſe his juſtice is here diſpenſed with moderation; though the time be comeing when he will execute juſtice without mercy:

But wherein any act of *Divine Providence*, one of theſe Attributes is more viſible to the creature then the other, thence it receives its Denomination.

Judgments, *are Iudicial acts of Gods Severity in the World, whererin he declares himſelfe to be ſet againſt ſin or ſinners*; Some tranſlate it *Chaſtizements*: Judgment ſometimes intend *proper acts of Revenging juſtice*; when God comes forth to right himſelfe upon his enemies, in their wonderfull deſtruction: Sometimes *ſevere afflictions*, though intended for the amendment of thoſe who ſuffer them: the word ſignifies properly, *a doing right*.

[*Righteouſneſs*] The word ſignifies *Truth and Equity*: it is oftentimes in Scripture reſtrained to *ſecond Table dutyes*, and then it is diſtinguiſhed from *Holyneſs*, which referrs to *firſt Table dutyes*, but here, as in many other places, it is uſed more largely, to ſignifie a *reformation of Life*, and univerſal *Anaſtaſy*, or *Reclaiming* from their former ſinfull courſes.

[*Will learne*] This is ſpoken as if ſuch an effect ſhould come to paſs in all that ſhould ſee and hear of Gods judgements; for the Scripture ſpeaks of ſome, that when Gods hand was upon them, they ſinned yet more: thus *Ahaz*: 2 Chron. 28.22. but it is ſpoken either,

1. *By way of Preſumption*, as if they ſhould ſay, *ſurely they will learn righteouſneſs*, or,

2. *Ex-*

2. *Expreſſing what ought to be*, as if it would be; ſuch a thing ſhould be, and if men were in a right frame, it would be: the meaning is, that there is matter enough in Gods judgements to awaken the world to righteouſneſs. Hence,

Doct. *The Judgements of God in the World carry along with them an univerſal awakening call to Righteouſneſs.* When God comes forth riding in his *fiery Chariot*, and diſpenſeth terrible things among the children of men, it ſends forth a loud cry to the world to reform and amend their ways. By way of Explication, Conſider a few things.

Firſt. *All judgements are of God*, it's ſaid thy judgements, they come from him: here obſerve,

1. *Some judgements are more immediate*, they come by an unſeen hand and in an unknowu way, we ſee the effects, but are not able to track them in their cauſes; of ſuch as theſe, even an *Egyptian Magician* muſt ſay, *Is the finger of God.*

2. *Other judgements come mediately by the mediation or efficiency of Inſtruments*, ſecond cauſes are the next occaſion of them, and theſe are either.

1. *Devils, who have a great ſtroake in many effects of providence*, they come by Divine permiſſion, God giving them a licenſe, ſo far as he ſees meet for his own ends; and ſometimes they come with a Commiſſion from God on his errands, who ſhall for us *perſwade* Ahab *to go to* Ramoth Gilead *and fall?* I, ſaith the Devills, *go, ſaith God, and proſper*, 1 Kings 22. 20. &c.

2. *Men, who are many times the meanes of bringing ſore and ſad calamities upon their fellow creatures*, being uſed and improved by God to that end, by Warrs, and deſolations that follow therupon, thus God uſed the *Philiſtins, Syrians, Aſſyrians* &c. to afflict Iſrael *and* Judah.

3. *Bruit beaſts and unreaſonable creatures*, who ſerve their great Lord againſt man, when he rebells againſt God, which otherwiſe ſhould have been ſubſervient to him: thus the *fiery Serpents in the wilderneſs*, the *two ſhee Bears*, to tear in peeces the mocking children, thus *Locuſts, Caterpillers, Palmer wormes* &c.

4. *Elements, Starrs, Rivers, Vapours, Rain*, Drought &c. the *Starrs fought in their courſe againſt Siſera*, the *brook Kiſhon ſwept them away* Judg 5.

By

By all these meanes God may bring severe punishments upon the creture for his sin: but all these are from God, they are his Judgments, and come of his errand. This appears;

1. From *the Supream Efficiency of God*; all creatures move as they are moved by him: in the matter of the action, if he give not his *Efficiency*, they can do nothing at all: *in him we live, move and have our being*: his Efficiency is the first mover, he is as it were the first wheel of the great clock of the world, or the spring of this watch: Second beings have an operation, but it hath an absolute dependence upon his Co-operation, so that if so much as a *dog wag his tongue* against us, there is not only *Divine permission* in it, but *Divin Efficiency* also.

2. From *his Providential Ordering of all the affaires of the world*: God *sits King upon the flood* Psal. 29. 10. He is Soveraign disposer of all things, and therefore good and evill comes from him, whoever it be that doth it. *Amos* 3. 6. God saith David, *bid Shemei curse*.

3. Because *Prayer to God hath been the meanes of turning aside judgment, yea even then when Instruments have done their worst*, the people of God in their distress. have but acquainted God with it, and sought him in the case, and the business hath been done: thus *David* prayes to God to *turn the counsell of Achitophel into foolishness*, and its done; and he who formerly was looked upon to speak *Oracles*, is now disregarded: *Hezekiah* doth tell, go into the the house of God, and spread *Rabshekah's raling letter* before him and leaves the case with him; and the next newes is, an Angel is sent from heaven, who slayes in one night *an hundred, fourscore* and *five* thousand of his enemies, 2 *Kings* 19. 35. Hence we have the Churches confidence in Gods protection, enabling them to *sound a challenge* to their enemies to do their worst against them. *Isa.* 8. 9, 10. there is their boldness, *God is with us*.

Secondly. *All those acts of Divine Providence, wherein God discovers his severity in any degree against sin*, are properly the Judgments of God: wherever God layes his heavy hand upon a people: *whether*.

1. In Revenging himself upon his enemies, by cutting them off, or sorely visiting them.

2. In Punishments and Chastisements upon his people, when for their amendment he brings disappointments and afflictions upon them; for in both these God doth 1. Shew himself set against sin: 2. Do right.

Thirdly, *Judgements* are either

1. *Mere ordinary* dispensations of Divine Providence, such as are more common, as the usual afflictions which God brings upon any in way of penalty, *viz.* Sicknesses, Crosses, Losses, Poverty, Disgrace, Rain, Famine, Pestilence, *&c.* these are Gods usual Scourges. Or

2. *More extraordinary*, when some remarkable providence that is not usual doth befall any, such Casualties as are more rare and unfrequent, such as Possession by Devils, Deaths by Thunder and Lightning, and the like.

Fourthly, *Judgements* are either

1. *Private and Personal*, when God shews his severity upon persons or families, who are singled out from others to be the subjects of affliction. Or

2. *General and Epidemical Visitations*, when God comes and brings a scourge upon a Country or a People.

Fifthly, *Judgements* are either

1. *Outward*, when the next and immediate subject they seize upon is mens Bodies or Estates, and damnifie them in either. Or

2. *Spiritual*, when they seize upon mens Souls and Spirits, as Distractions, Desperations, *&c.* I mention these distinctions, partly that we may be the better directed to a careful observance, that we may discover God coming in his several awful dispensations upon us, and partly because we may improve some of them in the Application.

Sixthly, All *Judgements* whatsoever, and in what way soever they come, are *Doctrinal*, they bring instruction and teaching along with them, to those that either see or hear of them: they are speaking Providences.

Here consider, 1. That they are Doctrinal. 2. How far they are so.

I. *That all Judgements are Doctrinal*, will appear, if we consider,

First, that Judgements in relation to the subject of them, are acts of the Soveraign Justice of God. There are two things in this Position.

1. They are *Acts of Justice*, because God visits none beyond their sins desert: what-ever Gods dealing be to any, he will vindicate himself

ſelf that he doth them no wrong, there is ſin enough in the creature to make him to *juſtifie God when he judgeth*, Pſal. 51. 3, 4. Job 40. 4, 5.

2. They are *Acts of Soveraign Juſtice*: which appears, becauſe God doth not viſit all alike in the world, whoſe ſins are alike, but picks and chuſeth as he ſees meet, ſome to be monuments of his ſeverity, whiles others are left. Gods Soveraignty herein appears, becauſe he follows no other Rule but his *own pleaſure*, in making choice whom to diſpenſe Judgements, and whom to leave; ſo that ſometimes he leaves, and lets alone, ſuch as have been greater ſinners in many aggravating reſpects, whiles he takes others that have not been ſo notorious: and therefore our Saviour Chriſt, to them enquiring about *the man born blinde*, removes the cauſe from them to Gods Soveraignty, *Joh.* 9. 2, 3.

Secondly, they naturally teach theſe leſſons:

1. That God is a juſt God, that he is ſet againſt ſin, and will not alwayes bear with ſinners: dayes of patience make ſinners forget, yea Atheiſtically think God is not holy and juſt; but he is known in his Judgements, theſe are beginning diſcoveries before the great and general Aſſizes.

2. That God will ſooner or later be revenged upon ſinners: every monument of Divine Revenge lectures out what others may look for and expect at the hands of God. Gods Judgements declare that ſin ſhall not alwayes go unpuniſhed, that though there be a day of forbearance, yet there ſhall alſo be a day wherein they ſhall receive their wages.

3. That there ſhall be a great Day of Judgement: for if ſome ſinners are here taken, and others in this world forborn, according to the pleaſure of Gods Soveraign will, this ſhews that there muſt be another day above and beſides all theſe Judgement-dayes, wherein God ſits upon ſome ſinners in this world.

4. That there is no ſecurity in a ſtate of ſin, though we are not ſuch notorious ſinners as others, yet are we under ſin; we lye open and liable to the Judgements of God, and may as ſoon as others be made monuments of it. It is no cloak to ſay, I am not as bad as ſuch and ſuch: Art thou out from the promiſe of Gods ſpecial grace? thou art every day open to Judgement.

5. That there is no ſafety but in making our peace with God: if God ſway the Scepter, and act his own pleaſure upon ſinners, we are in

in a dangerous ſtate as long as we are not agreed with him, but have him for our adverſary. And hence the concluſion is to teach men righteouſneſs, to forſake thoſe ſins that are provoking to God, and lay hold upon him in a way of true Repentance, in time, for his mercy, leſt we alſo be made monuments of his wrath: this is the voice of all the Judgements of God which they ſpeak to the world.

II. *How far they are Doctrinal:* This is conſiderable, either in reſpect of

1. The *Judgements* themſelves. All Judgements ſerve to teach, they have a voice in them, but ſome cry louder then others. There is a voice in common calamities and diſappointments, but a louder voice in extraordinary Judgements; Natural cauſes bring awful Judgements, but more awful when they are Preternatural; every ſickneſs and diſeaſe, every croſs and loſs ſpeaks, but when God goes out of the ordinary path, here is a more awakening Call. In a word, the more ſtupendious and admirable the Providence is, the louder is the voice of God, and more clear to be heard, for then *the Lion roars, Amos* 3 8.

2. Of the *Places* wherein they are:

(1.) *Judgements remote* have a voice to us, let them be never ſo far off, if we have any cognizance of them, for the Text limits it to no narrower bounds then the World.

(2.) But *Judgements near* are more loud: when a fire is in our neighbours houſe, it then bids us to look about us to ſecure our own.

(3.) But *Judgements at home* are moſt loud of all, in our Town, or in our Families, for then God cries among us, yea the ſtroke of his Rod is upon us, and therefore its high time for every one to ſee to himſelf.

3. In reſpect of Senſes:

(1.) *Judgements heard of* are awful, for this is a great ſenſe of diſcipline. But

(2.) *Judgements ſeen and felt* are more dreadful and awakening; and the Reaſon is, Becauſe theſe Senſes are more intelligent, and leſs fallacious: we may queſtion the truth of reports, but what we *ſee* and *feel* we have leſs cauſe to ſuſpect. If any Senſe can inform without fallacy, it is theſe: as alſo theſe are the moſt affecting Senſes, *The eye affects the heart*, much more then when the hand of God lyes heavy upon a perſon.

Seventhly, It is the will and command of God that his Judgements should teach men righteousnes.

Reas. 1. Because he singles out some to shew his judgements upon, and takes not all sinners as he might do: this shews that God would have men improve this day of his patience to Repentance. God hath Pleas enough against others, and might have executed his wrath on them, but when he does not, he shews that he would have others to get good by it.

Reas. 2. Because God in his Word calls men to consider and observe his Judgements; he declares it to be his will, that when he visits any in severity for their sins, *All Israel should hear, and fear, and do no more so.* When God would reclaim *Judah* from their vain confidence, and awaken them to repentance, he sends them to *Shiloh*, to see what wastes and desolations he had there made, *Jer.*7.12.

Reas. 3. Because none of Gods Providences are in vain, God doth nothing in the world to no purpose.

Reas. 4. Because God does by his awakening Judgements teach them he intends good to: *David* professeth, *Thy judgements make me afraid*, i.e. afraid to sin, afraid to be licentious and remiss in my life and wayes.

Reas. 5. Because God doth charge the neglect of this duty upon *Judah* as a great, grievous, and provoking sin: when he had executed his judgements upon her sister *Aholah* (*Israel*, the Ten Tribes) that *Aholibah* (*Judah*) held on her own old courses of sin, and was no whit affected therewithall, nor did by it learn to amend, *Ezek.*23.

Use 1. Of *Information* of our judgements in divers things:

1. That Afflictions and Calamities are not by casualty, they are Gods Judgements, ordered and fore-determined by him; not a Sparrow falls to the ground without him: and therefore let it teach us not to slight them, or look upon them in a negligent manner, as things that come promiscuously, and imprudently to pass, but by the wise disposal of God. See God in all that falls out in the world, and adore him.

2. That it is our duty to look beyond Instruments in every Judgement that befalls us. It is true, Instruments are some of them rational, some are irrational; and hence some Instruments may be blame-worthy, may justly be accused, and if God give opportunity, may in a way of Equity be proceeded against: but we must not rest in the

the malice of Instruments, but look further, and see the hand of God: its a foolish dog that runs after the stone, and minds not the hand that threw it. If we look upon the most rational Instruments, as they be in the hands of God, and consider them as under his Soveraign disposal, they are no more then as an Ax or Knife, or any other instrument in the hands of a man: *The Assyrian my rod*, Isa. 10.5. Hence God is nevertheless to be seen for the malice or spight of the creature, because he improves even *the wrath of man to his praise, and the remainder of wrath he restrains*. Learn we hence in all the Judgements that befall us, not so much to say what means the instrument, but what provokes God, *though Syrian before and Philistim behinde, yet let Israel return to God that smites him*.

3. That times wherein God brings his Judgements among a people, are solemn times, and ought to be entertained with solemnity; they are times of serious consideration, *Hag.* 1.5. and humiliation. God when he visits a people in Judgement, bids *blow the trumpet, call a solemn assembly, return to the Lord with weeping, wailing, and lamentation*, *Joel* 2.1,2,13. We are not therefore before God this day in this solemn duty, uncalled for.

4. That no person that sees or hears of Gods Judgements is unconcerned: if he be an inhabitant of this world, there is a voice to him. Learn we therefore to have a care of disinteressing our selves, or saying, What relation hath this or that to me?

5. That the more of Gods Judgements have been among a people, the more God will have against them, if they repent not; God will have despised Judgements to lay to their charge: it will be an heavy aggravation of such a peoples sin, that they have not onely had and enjoyed God's Ordinances among them, but those backed with his Truth-confirming Providences, speaking once and again, speaking to many Senses at once, and yet they have got nothing by them; this is an argument of an exceeding hard heart. Gods Judgements in this world, if we repent not, will not mitigate but increase our judgements and woes in another.

Use II. For *Reproof*. And here let me come home in this Use and the next, to the case and providence which hath occasioned this dayes solemnity, the awful Judgement of God that is among us: and the Reproof is, That the Judgements of God that have befallen us, and in particular this great Judgement, is no more nor better made

uſe of by us then it is. Let this conſideration have its weight in humbling us this day before God.

1. We may all chide with our own hearts, that we are no more affected with it, that there is ſo much ice and coldneſs in us, that our affections are ſcarce warmed with ſuch a providence; we may lay our hands upon our mouthes, and be angry with our ſelves, that we finde ſuch a chilneſs upon our affections. But

2. Particularly, thoſe deſerve a Reproof,

Firſt, That make all their application to thoſe whom the Judgement is upon: Oh the ſpirit of cenſure that is in too many, and there they reſt; Surely there is ſome ſpecial reaſon, ſome more then ordinary provocation, why elſe is God come out upon that Family, rather then upon any other Family? I do not here ſpeak to make thoſe whom the Judgement nextly concerns, to be regardleſs of Gods hand upon them; no, let them know that God calls them into the School of Search, and would have them in particular try what is the meaning of his ſo ſevere coming out againſt them, that they may learn to ſit in ſilence, and juſtifie him: But I ſpeak to others, who are apt to judge of perſons by providences, though Scripture teacheth us that *all things fall out alike unto all*. And therefore let ſuch conſider,

1. This practice is contrary to our Saviours precept, who admoniſheth others by ſuch providences to learn this leſſon, that *except they repent, they ſhall likewiſe periſh*, Luke 13 2,3. it ſeems perſonal application ſuits better, its the wiſeſt way to bring all things home to our own Souls; that might be profitable to us.

2. This is to forget our own ſinfulneſs: whiles we judge and cenſure others, we do tacitly juſtifie our ſelves, and think our ſelves better then others; we interpret our merit rather then Gods mercy to be the diſtinguiſhing cauſe: and is not this to lift up our ſelves too high?

3. This is to forget divine Soveraignty: God all this while is not adored by us in his Supreme uncontrolable diſpoſal which he hath of all creatures, to lay his hand where he pleaſeth, without giving account to the creature. Conſider well with thy ſelf, and it may be thou haſt been ten times a greater ſinner, if all the circumſtances of aggravation were well pondered and weighed, but God for ends beſt known to himſelf hath thus dealt.

4. This is the way to rob God of the glory of his goodneſs to thee

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in preſerving thee from this ſad Calamity, whereas if thou reflect inward, thou mighteſt ſee ſo much of provocation in thy own heart, and ſo many grievous obliquities and wanderings, that it would ſet thee into a rapture of admiration, at the unſpeakable favour which appears in thy preſervation, who mighteſt have been choſen in the room of this perſon, to have been hung up as a ſign, and a wonder, and an aſtoniſhment, for others with ſad hearts to have looked upon.

3. This is not to learn Righteouſneſs; for that is onely by drawing concluſions home to our ſelves, and making the caſe our own: yea, this is a way to harden our hearts in wickedneſs. Let us therefore learn to make a better uſe of this tremendous Providence.

Secondly, Thoſe that look not beyond Inſtruments. There is a great deal of enquiry made about the Devils agency, and raiſing of Spirits againſt ſuch as we are ready to think may be his ſubſervient actors in this caſe, but how many are there that look no further. Conſider,

1. This is to forget the Supremacy of Divine Providence; we do not remember that God ſits and rules over Men and Devils, and that in ſuch an uncontrolable manner, that Earth and Hell cannot move to any act upon the creature, unleſs he permit them.

2. It tends to hinder the right efficacy of this Judgement upon the Soul; for it raiſeth, and humbles not the Soul of the creature: it is the way to provocation and exaſperation, to bitterneſs and rage, from the conſideration of the virulency of the enemy, and that we have not deſerved it at their hands, &c. whereas if we looked beyond theſe, to God the prime Efficient, it would teach us ſilence, and holy ſubmiſſion: *I was dumb*, &c. *becauſe thou didſt it*, Pſal. 39. 9.

Thirdly, Thoſe that look upon the Providence with ſlighty and common affections, whoſe hearts are not awed by it, but look upon it as a matter of little or no concernment, are as jocund, as vain, as light, as frothy as ever they were: there are too many of theſe. Conſider,

1. This argues that God is not feared by ſuch hearts, thoſe that fear not God in his Judgements, eſpecially in ſuch Judgements, may well be thought not to fear him at all. Aſſure thy ſelf if this Providence, ſo ſolemn, have left no impreſſion upon thee, thou haſt a heart as hard as a rock.

2. It is impoſſible that ſuch ſhould learn Righteouſneſs: the Affections

Affections are the feet of the Soul, if these move not, there is little good to be hoped for in such an one, and therefore never look that such should get any good by it.

Fourthly, Those that have lost their Affections: it may be many were at the first, at the newness and strangeness of the sight and spectacle, filled for a season with consternation; but now they are gotten to their old wont again, and recovered their frights and amazements, dried up their tears, and wiped their eyes, and they are where they were before: this shews that this Judgement had no depth of efficacy upon your souls, it was onely something external; it shews what your nature is. Oh, that's of a cold nature indeed, that will freeze while the fire is under it. Let all such consider, that they contemn God, and harden their own hearts, and if he do not wonderfully set in, it will be to their own destruction.

Use III. For *Exhortation* and *Direction*. Oh let it be an awakening word of Counsel to us all. We are now come together to affect our souls with this stupend Judgement of God which is among us, the Lord in mercy grant that it may teach us Righteousness; the voice of God cries aloud by it to this poor Town in a special manner, the Lord give us an hearing ear: let it be our great request, that he would *bore our ear to instruction*, that it may not pass by without doing us true and saving good. For *Motive*:

1. Let us consider the awfulness of the Judgement it self: this is none of those ordinary dispensations of Gods Providence which are frequent and usual in the world, to be sure not among us, it is no common sickness and calamity, and yet if it had been no more it had been our duty to have wisely considered it, and given attention to the voice of it; but it is extraordinary and stupendious: it is not usuall for God to give Satan such liberty and power, so to rack and torture, so to hurry and perplex poor creatures, and therefore something is in special to be learned by us, when God thus leaves the common track, and comes in so unwonted a way of Judgement.

2. Consider how nearly we are related unto it above other in the Land: there is a voice in it to the whole Land, but in a more especial manner to poor *Groton*; it is not a Judgement afar off, but it is near us, yea among us, God hath in his wisdome singled out this poor Town out of all others in this Wilderness, to dispense such an amazing Providence in, and therefore let us make a more near and special use

uſe of it: Let us look upon our ſelves to be ſet up as a *Beacon upon a Hill* by this Providence, and let thoſe that hear what hath been done among us, hear alſo of the good effects, and reformation it hath wrought among us.

3. Conſider what advantage we have above others to be affected with it: others indeed may hear of it, relations may be carried from one place to another, and that may affect, yet not ſo much as when it is ſeen. Why, we may ſay as *Job*, *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye ſees thee.* Reports may be carried various, and that may wound a great part of the credit of it abroad in the world, as not knowing how or where to faſten their belief; however, when never ſo truly reported, it cannot carry the life of the thing with it: but we have ſeen, yea ſeen ſuch things as one would think might melt, or break an heart of ſtone; we may carry about with us every day, the very pourtraicture of thoſe Helliſh and Diabolicall Cruelties, thoſe ſtrange Geſtures, thoſe dreadful Voices: and therefore if we be not awed and affected by it, who ſhould?

4. Conſider how ſad it will be for us, if we be not awed and affected with this Judgement, if we learn nothing by it: Oh how much will God have againſt us, above others! the nearer he hath come to us, and the more we are concerned in it, and the louder the Cry hath been to us, will all have their particular weight to increaſe our condemnation, God will lay every circumſtance to our charge, and as he hath ſingularly revealed his minde to us in it, ſo he will have a ſingular provocation by it. Oh! little do we know how much this providence ſlighted and miſimproved will adde to the weight of our ſins, and increaſe of our woes. Let it then be a ſolemn leſſon to teach us Righteouſneſs. For *Direction:*

Firſt, Let us all in general learn ſomething by it, let it afford us ſome practical concluſions, which may be for our uſe and benefit to inſtruct and teach us in wayes of Righteouſneſs; namely,

1. Learn by it that Satan is buſie in places of Goſpel light, to ſeduce and draw away Souls from attending the means of grace. The Light of the Goſpel doth not clear and free places from Satan or his bold Temptations, theſe infernal Spirits of darkneſs will come thither, and there endeavour to raiſe miſts and fogs to ſeduce ſouls; and therefore let us learn not to live ſecurely under the enjoyment of the Goſpel of grace, but to *ſpend our time of ſojourning here in holy fear.*

2. That there is no place free, no not the Houſe of God from Satans Temptations: when thou art in Gods Houſe, and thy bodily preſence to attend the Ordinances, the diſpenſing of the Goſpel, Satan will come thither, as he often did to this poor creature, he will do all he can to ſteal away thy minde and meditation, he will begin a parly with thee that ſhall laſt as long as the Sermon, and thou ſhalt go away without receiving one word of inſtruction. Oh how can he pleaſe thy fancy, and delude thy ſoul! and therefore let it awaken thee to be careful to *keep thy foot when thou comeſt to the houſe of God*, if thou *wouldeſt not offer the ſacrifice of fools*, Eccleſ. 5, 1. The feet of the ſoul are the Affections, learn to be more watchful over them, to keep them from wandring, leſt Satan meet and make a prey of them, and ſo ſteal away the ſeed of the Word from thee.

3. That diſcontent layes us exceeding open to the aſſaults of Satan, and gives him more then ordinary advantage to make diſcoveries of himſelf to us: little do we know how we do as it were invite the Devil by it. In any Government, diſcontented perſons are fitteſt for Traytors to work upon: by diſcontent we diſcover a wearineſs of Gods Government, and therefore Satan is emboldened by it to come, yea to make his Apparitions, and ſtrike in to the drawing over of poor creatures to enter a *Covenant of Rebellion* with him, and a wonder it is if any at ſuch a time eſcape. Learn we therefore to be more watchfull over our own hearts, beware how we give any way to ſecret upriſings againſt the Providence of God.

4. That this world would be a ſad place to live in, if it were not for Gods over-ruling Providence. Oh how buſie is the Devil, that great Adverſary of Souls! and how full is he of Cruelty! did not God reſtrain his rage, he would ſoon make poor Mortals incapable of living here below: By the Claw you may judge of the Lion. We finde in *Jobs* caſe, he goes to the outſide of his Commiſſion: and here you have a lively ſpectacle of his venome and ſpight; Oh then let it awaken us to ſee by whom we are every day preſerved and protected from the rage of Devils, God onely: Alas! what were we in the hands of theſe infernal Powers, if Gods Omnipotency did not reſtrain them. Let this make God more glorious in our eyes.

5. That there is no ſafety but under the wings of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: he onely is the *ſtrong man* that can ſecure us from the poſſeſſion of Satan. Satan rules and reigns in this world, and you ſee how much

much power he holds over the children of disobedience. And therefore learn hence both to bless God for Christ Jesus, who came into the world to *destroy the works of the Devil*; had he not come to set up his Kingdome in this world, the Devil would have reigned Lord and King in all Souls, he onely is able to dispossess the strength, and uncastle the Powers of Hell: as also to fly under the wings of this Redeemer for safeguard, that we may be freed from these cruel Enemies.

6. That visible Priviledges are no security from Satan: it's not enough to be *baptized with water*, unless we be also *baptized with the holy Ghost, and with fire*; it's not enough to be a Member of the visible Church, if we be not also of Christs invisible Flock: Satan is not terrified by these outward things, he is not afraid to assault those that are Christs nominally, and to endeavour to make them his own really. Let it teach us then to beware that we *trust not in lying words*, have a care of crying *The Temple of the Lord*; Satan desires no better advantage upon us, then to draw us to rest secure upon this bottom. Bless God for our Priviledges, but rest not in them; prize, but do not deifie them, if you would not be made the prey of Satan.

2ly, Let us all in particular *learn righteousness* by this monument that is before us, let it awaken us all to reform our hearts and lives, to be more careful to and over our selves for the time to come; let it indeed appear that we have been proficients in this School of Gods Judgements, that God hath brought *Correction* and *Teaching* together, that so in the winding up it may be found an happy Judgement. Let us therefore apply it to our selves in our particular respects.

I. Let it be a Doctrinal Providence to *Young* and *Old*.

First, To you that are *Elder*, and more grown up in years, let it awaken you.

1. Consider how many more provocations God hath had from you, then he hath had from this poor creature; how many more Ordinances and Providences have attended upon you, then ever did upon her; think how long you have lived in Gods world, and yet have done him little or no service since you came into it: and therefore let this awaken you to see how it stands with you, how the matter goes between God and your Souls, whether you are secure under his wings, and at peace with him. When you see one so much younger then you thus visited, Oh think upon what ground you stand, fear

the like or worse, if you are yet in an uncertain state. Let it in a special manner awaken old ones to *make their calling and election sure*, considering how much danger you are in.

2. Let it teach you how much you have had of the patience of God exercised towards you, that God hath born with and forborn you so long; you have lived a great while longer in the world, and it may be have been more enormous and flagitious in your lives then ever this poor creature was: possibly you have lived in scandalous sins, and grievous pollutions: if you should consider, and ask a Reason why God hath taken her and not taken you, you may see and say, that if God had gone according to outward appearance, or extremity of rigour, there had been transcendently more ground why he should have come upon you. Oh then, when you see one so young, and one not observed to be guilty of any flagitious crimes taken, while you are by Gods goodness spared, learn to admire at, and worship the patience of God towards you.

3. Let it therefore teach you to amend your wayes, and reform your lives, and that speedily: it may be a great argument to quicken you up no longer to use delayes, nor put off God coming to you in his Word, and perswading you by his Spirit to repent and return to him. Oh see in this lecture upon what slippery and dangerous ground you stand, and have stood all this while, and if God had been severe towards you, you had not had this opportunity of being called to Repentance; and then learn to shake off all delayes, to put by all excuses, and bless God that you yet have an opportunity.

Secondly, You that are *Young ones*, behold here one of your Tribe and Form, as I may say, one of your own years pickt out of you by the wise Providence of God, to be made an object of Gods severity, and mans pity. Out of doubt there is an especial Cry to you *Young ones*, to *Remember your Creator in the dayes of your youth*: you have been often counselled and admonished in the House of God, yea earnestly and compassionately intreated to devote your young time to God, to give up the prime of your years to him; but you have slighted and disregarded such Counsels and Calls, and have taken up firm resolutions that you would have your childish and youthful vanities, let God by his Messenger say what he would to you: Well, now God hath singled you out in his Providence, and thunders out his minde to you in this sad Object, and what do you now say to it? will you hear

Gods

Gods voice, or will you forbear? are you ſtill reſolved in your vain courſes, or will you *learn Righteouſneſs?* if you would but encline your ears, you might here obſerve God ſpeaking ſomething to you.

1. Learn, that there is no ſafety in dallying with the Spirit of God, who comes early to beſpeak your Sou's for God. God ſhews that he hath a quarrel with the Youth for ſlighting and deſpiſing Counſels and Reproofs; he would that you ſhould know he is in haſte for an anſwer, and will not wait long if you trifle away your time: God looks that where there is ſo much of *Goſpel light*, and ſo many endeavours uſed by Church and Common-wealth for the inſtruction of Youth in the Wayes of God, there ſhould be anſwerable improvement made, and will have you to know that his patience will not wait ſo long as in places of ignorance. Let it therefore teach you to beware how you preſume upon *hereafter*, and promiſing your ſelves that there is time enough, you may follow your vain courſes yet a little longer: Whiles you are thinking it is too ſoon to repent and amend, how ſoon may God come and declare that it is too late, that his patience is ſpent, and there is no more room left for Repentance.

2. That either God or the Devil will have your young time: you are here at your choice, God by his Word and Spirit is tendring you to receive you into his ſervice, and declaring how acceptable and pleaſing it will be to him, but if you will not give your time to him, you will to a worſe Maſter, the Devil ſtands waiting, yea endeavouring for you, and if Gods yoke pleaſe you not, he will eaſily perſwade you to take his; and though that may ſeem delightful for the preſent, yet know it, *it will be bitterneſs in the latter end.*

3. That if *Young ones* will not have Chriſt to reign over them, he may give them over into the hands and power of Satan: if Chriſts ſweet government do not pleaſe you, you ſhall be left under the tyranny and cruelty of the Devil. Oh then learn hence not to deſpiſe and contemn the Calls of the Goſpel, leſt God come out in Judgement againſt you, and put you into the everlaſting poſſeſſion of that cruel Enemy of your Souls.

II. Let this Providence teach both *Parents* and *Children*: Here is ſomething for both.

Firſt, Let it be a teaching Providence to you that are *Parents*, do you *learn* Leſſons of *Righteouſneſs* by it.

1. Let it affect you with the dangerous caſe and ſtate of your poor

Childrens Souls: here you may see how open they are by nature to Satans temptations, how they every day go in danger of those sly and subtile assaults of this politick enemy of their Souls: let this lye near your hearts.

2. Hence let this teach you to be careful in Educating them in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*, which is the onely way and means to prevent this adversary. If you have hitherto been remiss, learn now to be more careful and vigilant about it, let it be a quickning providence to rouse you up from this neglect, by teaching you the great weight of the duty, even of as much moment as the precious lives of their poor souls.

3. Let it teach you to begin with them betimes, do not defer instructing of them too long, you see Satan will set upon them early, he will not delay long before he comes and useth his endeavours to draw your Childrens souls away after him: and therefore if you would prevent him, do not you delay, but be dropping in instruction as they are able, and as soon as they are able to understand any thing.

4. Whithersoever they go, bear a holy jealousie over them, lest they should offend God, and provoke him to leave them to the Devil: you cannot be alwayes with them, nor constantly have them under your eye, but where-ever they be, be sure let your hearts go along with them, have a righteous fear concerning them: you see Satan is ready to take all occasions to insinuate himself into them, and therefore for ought you know they may have the Devil in their company.—let that direct your souls to heaven for them, that God would look to them, and preserve them: *Job* offers Sacrifice for his Children, when met in lawful recreation, *lest they sinned, and cursed God in their hearts*, Job 1.5.

5. Be more watchful over them hereafter, then you have been heretofore; have a care of letting them have their swinge, to go and come where and when they please, and especially in the night; be sure take an account of their business, and hold your Parental Authority over them, keep them within their bounds, you had better bear their hard thoughts of you now, then see them made vassals of Satan, and left up to Gods Judgements. If your Children resist or contemn your Authority, the Will of God is that you should not bear with them, nor spare them; it is a great deal better they should live in

Bridewell

Bridewell under restraint, then in your Families at their liberty.

6. See to your own lives, that they be exemplary to your Children, if you teach them never so carefully, yet if you unteach them again by your vain conversation before them, its little the better: think how much advantage you put into Satans hands against your Children, to draw them into sin by your example, he knows well enough what a taking argument this is with Children.

7. Rest not satisfied, but be constant and earnest with God for your Children till you see *Christ formed in them*, as knowing that till then they are in Satans Kingdome, and under his Jurisdiction. Oh what bowels of affection, what earnest requests might this providence arm us withall! how strong might it make us with God for our Children! O pity them in a state of unregeneracy: Christless souls are naked souls, and therefore lye open to the enemy; cease not therefore night nor day begging for them. See in this providence their danger, and let it quicken you to importunacy.

Secondly, *Children* do you learn something hence also.

1. Learn to hearken to the loving and wholesom Counsels of your Parents, and not to slight or despise their Admonitions and Reproofs. You see here how open you are to Satans assaults, and if you will not hear God speaking to you by your Parents, it is just with God to leave you to the Devil, to hear him: know it, when your Parents speak to you, and advise you for your good, God speaks to you by them, and if *your eye despise them*, God may suffer these infernal *Ravens* and *Eagles to pick it out, and eat it*. One would think this Monument might make you fear and tremble.

2. Learn hence not to trust to your Parents Covenant, or to think that you shall be saved by their Faith, or by it secured from Satan: it is true, you may fare the better by them and for them, but if you rest upon their godliness for your security, you are deceived: you may be the natural Children of godly Parents, and yet the spiritual Children of the Devil, *Joh.*8.43,44. Know it, it is not enough to be the Children of godly Parents, unless you do inherit their graces; seek therefore that, or else Satan hath you at his beck.

3. Rest not upon your Parents Prayers; think it not enough that your godly Parents pray for you to God, and therefore you are safe: true, Parents Prayers are a great benefit to Children, but if they be trusted to, they will prove a meer delusion. *Abraham* prayes for

Ishmael,

Ishmael, but he prayes not for himself: God may answer your Parents Prayers in another way, they shall not lose them, but yet if you rest there, they may but increase your woes. Let this therefore call upon you to make your own peace.

4. Learn to obey your Parents in all their lawful Commands, and that in obedience unto God: acknowledge their authority and jurisdiction over you, and though they restrain you from that which you may think to be a lawful liberty, yet be obedient in all things lawful, for though the thing be a matter indifferent, yet if you disobey and displease your Parents in it, be sure you lay your selves open to Satan.

III. Let it teach both the *Regenerate*, and *Unregenerate*.

First, You that are *Regenerated*, and brought home to God, you may learn something here.

1. Let this providence teach you to magnifie Gods grace, that hath taken you out of Satans Kingdome, and *translated you into the Kingdome of his own Son*. When-ever we see any left by God, and in any wayes in the hand of Satan, and under his power, how should it fil us with God-glorifying thoughts, at the consideration of his wonderfull love to us. Now is a time to consider who made the difference between two pieces of the same clay, to remember how opposite we were to any saving good, what pains God took with us, what perswasions he used, and how contumeliously we often handled his Spirit; to consider that if his love had not carried him against our hatred, had not he pitied us, when we did not, could not pity our selves, we had yet to this day been under the dominion of Hell.

2. Let it awaken you to *walk worthy of your vocation*, *you now see your calling*, you are called out of Satans kingdome, you are delivered from the powers of darkness, labour then to walk no longer *in the vanity of your mindes*: Are you Gods Children? *Live in holiness*, 1 *Pet.* 1.14, *&c.* Oh that this Providence might awaken those that have given up themselves to God and his Service, to consider whether we have not too much gratified Satan, by being too light, too vain, too excessive in taking liberty in worldly mirth and vanity, too little spiritual in our course and conversation among men. Let it then be a word of Warning to us to be more serious and cautious to our selves and wayes for the time to come.

3. Let it move in you yarning bowels of compassion towards those that

that are yet in Satans Kingdome, and under his ſpiritual Juriſdiction: you may here ſee a little, though but a little, yet ſo much appears here viſible and demonſtrative, as may give a glimpſe of diſcovery how ſad and doleful the condition of poor unregenerate ſinners is, who are *ſpiritually poſſeſt by Satan*. Let it then rouſe up in you bowels of pity, when you look in the faces of any ſuch, let it make you to mourn over them, and pray for them, and counſel and adviſe them as God gives you opportunity, that if it may be, you may be helpful to their eſcape out of the paws of the devouring Lion.

4. Let it awaken you to watch your wayes and actions, to be carefull to your lives and courſes, how you carry it before them who are yet in their vanity, leſt Satan make you his *Stales* to allure poor ſouls by. If the Devil can *belye* the people of God to encourage others to hearken to him, be ſure he will make his market of *your failings*, negligent walkings, and whatſoever is done amiſs by you at one time or other, to draw others more fearleſſly after him; and will it not be a ſad thing that ſouls ſhould follow Satan to their eternal ruine and perdition, and you the live-birds that have drawn them into this net? For the Lords ſake, for the love you bear to poor ſouls, if there be any pity, any compaſſion, any deſire to Gods glory, or others Salvation, look to your wayes, and ſee they be exemplary.

Secondly, You that are *Unregenerate*, labour to hear the voice of God in this Providence, and learn by it.

1. Let this Example teach you how *cruel a Maſter* you ſerve: you ſee here, that Satan (whatever pretences he makes, and fair promiſes he ſeeks to delude poor ſouls withall) is in his heart ſet againſt all mankinde, and he ſeeks only to deſtroy them; and if once God lets him looſe, and gives him liberty, he will ſoon ſhew his own nature, and give evidence of his Cruelty. This you have ſeen is but a little of that bitter ſpight he will exerciſe upon thoſe who ſhall be wholly delivered into his hands. You have little cauſe to boaſt of your condition, its a cruel bondage, you are in the hands of one whoſe *tender mercies are cruelty*. Oh that this might make you weary of Satans government, that it might make you begin to diſcover his policies, and flee from him.

2. Let it ſhew you the great danger you go in every hour of being made a prey to Satan. Conſider how ready this Adverſary is to faſten his Talons upon poor creatures, if God permit him: and conſider

that thou haſt no ſecurity, no ground to promiſe thy ſelf that God will defend thee from him, no not for a moment, it is Gods goodneſs that he hath hitherto afforded thee his protection, but thou haſt no promiſe that he will continue it: Yea conſider, how many Calls and Counſels, how many Providences and Ordinances thou haſt deſpiſed, how often God hath come to thee, and wooed earneſtly for thy ſoul, uſed heart-breaking intreaties with thee, endeavouring to inſinuate himſelf into thy very ſoul, and yet thou haſt hardned thy heart againſt all, and reſolutely refuſed: think then, what haſt thou to ſay for thy ſelf why thou mayeſt not ſpeedily hear God ſay to the Devil, *Take the full and everlaſting poſſeſſion of ſuch a ſoul?* and what will become of thee then?

3. Hence let it be a loud Cry to you to Repentance: You have had many Cries in your ears from the Word, but you have not believed the report which Gods Meſſengers have brought. Oh that you would believe when God addes ſuch a Confirmation to the truth of his Word! reade your own ſtate in this poor Monument, and think by what you ſee in her, what is like to become of you in the ſtate you are in; hearken, and you may hear God crying to you by her, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

Laſtly, let me return once again to all that are here in Gods preſence this day to humble themſelves before him: learn we hence, for this day, and hence-forward, theſe two Leſſons.

1. Let us all examine by this Providence what ſins they have been, that have given Satan ſo much footing in this poor place: ſure the voice of God is loud to us, and bids us to bring this matter upon ſearch; for though God be Soveraign, yet it is to us a time of Conſideration when Gods hand is out againſt us, *Hag.* 1.7. Let it then bring us upon a ſerious Triall of our ſelves and wayes, that we may be able to trace God in his Providence, and acknowledge his righteous Judgements; let us ask whether our *Contentions* have not ſet open this door, and invited Satan in? I am ſure theſe carry a very great reſemblance of the Devils *Cloven Foot*. Have not our *Heart-Diviſions* grieved away the Spirit of God, and given Satan this advantage? I am ſure they leave a people faulty, *Hoſ.* 10 2. and therefore lay them open to ſevere puniſhments: theſe have been too generall ſins, and what have been in particular? What a deal of *worldly-mindedneſs* in the elder ſort? the *vanity* and *looſeneſs* in the younger,

increaſed

increased to such a height of impudency. Let me adde, the general *light esteem* there hath been among us of Gods holy and precious *Ordinances*, and *contempt* of his *Messengers*: these are crying sins, and therefore may well be answered with loud-speaking Providences.

2. Let us all joyn heart and hand to drive this Enemy out again. Let that be our great business this day to implore God, and beg his assistance and direction in so great a Work as this is; and let us forthwith set upon it, and follow it might and main: and that in repentance of, and humiliation for what is past, and reformation for the future, *let us search and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord*; Let us lay aside *Envy* and *Malice*, throw down our *Contention* & *Strife*, and take up *Peace and Love*. Let the Aged reform their *Earthly-mindedness*, and the Youth their *Vanity*, their Night-walkings, and merry Drinking-meetings; let the *Judgements of God* awe our hearts, and leave such impressions behinde them, as may powerfully lead us in wayes of Righteousness, that God may delight to dwell among us, and *tread Satan under our feet*.

ISAIAH 21. 11, 12.

11 *The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?*

12 *The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.*

TImes of publick Calamity, either felt, or justly feared, are trying Times; these do call in a solemn manner for Consideration, and especially to enquire into the Causes, and bethink of the sad Events. This is *New-Englands* day, wherein God hath at least taken the Rod into his hand, and is shewing some part of his severity toward us; and though he mix it with much moderation, yet there is a great deal of bitterness in the Cup: 'tis time therefore humbly to enquire into the grounds, and consider of the Consequences of these Calamities. The Text before us may afford us something by way of Instruction and Direction in this enquiry.

The words are a Prophesie against *Dumah*, delivered by way of *Question* and *Answer*.

The *Question* is propounded *ver.* 11.

The *Answer* is short, full, and sharp, *ver.* 12.

The meaning of the words take up as they come to be handled in particular.

The burden] *i.e.* A Prophesie containing Threatnings of Wrath, and Predictions of Misery: an ordinary phrase it is among the Prophets, to express any Vision of sad consequence. See *Chap.* 13. 1. and this Chapter, *ver.* 1, 13. and therefore the Prophet interprets the sense of the word, *ver.* 2. *An hard Vision.* See also 2 *Kings* 9. 25. *Jer.* 23. 33. and elsewhere. Hence

Doct. *The denunciations of Gods wrath against a sinning people is a Burden, a thing heavy and grievous.* In divers considerations.

1. They are *a burden to Gods Messengers*; i.e. grievous and hard to them, their spirits are oppressed, and many times even overwhelmed within them, to fore-think of the message they have to deliver.

See

See *ver.* 3,4. *Chap* 15.5. & 16.9. *Jer.*48, 31,32. & 4.19,20.

2. They are a *burden to the People* to whom they are sent. This in two respects:

(1.) They are *a burden of grief and sorrow* to the godly, who hear and fear, *Hab.*3.16.

(2.) Of *indignation* to the wicked, who cannot endure so much as to hear of them, the very Threatning is to them intolerable, *Amos* 7. 10. 2 *Chron.* 36.16. *Jer.*26.8,9.

3. In some sense they are *a burden to God*, who speaking after the manner of men, expresseth a relenting at the very mention of it, *Hos.*11.8,9.

4. *A burden in the Effects* of them, or matter of Threatning contained in them, which is sore and heavy to bear: Context, *ver.*2.

The *Reasons* are:

1. Of the first; From the sympathetical compassionateness of Gods Messengers towards their fellow-creatures, there is a *Philanthropy*, A love of man naturally in man, this is increased by grace: this we see eminent in *Paul*, *Rom.*9.1. and *Moses*, *Blot me rather out of thy book.*

2. Of the second; From the sense of the severity of Gods displeasure in the godly, and hence it produceth sorrow for their sins.

(1.) It brings sin to minde, which is the Cause, *Psal.*25.17,18.

(2.) The people of God know what a sad thing it is to have to do with an angry God, *Psal.*76.7.

3. Of the third; From the pride of heart which is in the wicked, *Jer.*43.2. they are too good to be reproved, will not hear by reason of the height of their spirits, think so well of themselves, that they cannot believe that God is displeased at them.

4. Of the fourth; From the compassions of God towards poor sinners, he herein discovers his merciful Nature, *Hos.*11.8.

5. Of the fifth; From the averseness of the nature of man from sorrows and miseries: they are against our nature, and therefore must needs be burdensome; yea they are Punishments, and are therefore grievous.

Use 1. See here a Reason why Gods Warnings and Threatnings finde no more welcome, and why plain Preaching Ministers are hated: sinning man is gotten above warning, though by our sins we are pulling down Gods Judgements upon our heads, all this is nothing, but

he that tells us plainly of them, and represents the anger of God before us for them, he is *the troubler of Israel*.

Use II. Learn hence to interpret the Threatnings of Judgement denounced by Gods Messengers in the best sense, when they tell you of Gods wrath. Oh do not think they tell you as they would have it, or that they take any delight in bringing such heavy tidings, but they must say as God commands them, *Jer.*28.6. they can be gladly content that the threatning may never be fulfilled.

Use III. Here is a mark to distinguish the people of God from hypocritical Professors: when God tells us plainly of our sins, and speaks of his wrath, 'tis indeed *a burden* to all, but how? why, the wicked endeavour to throw it off themselves, and cast it upon Gods Ministers, and violently to pull their shoulder from under it; but the people of God sit down under it, and bear it patiently, yea take up a new *burden of sorrow* for the sin which hath procured it, *Lam.*3.27,28,39.

Use IV. Learn hence what use to make of the threatning of Gods Judgements, and Reproofs of your sins, if it be *a burden* to hear of them, what then will it be to bear them? if you cannot endure to sit quietly whiles you are told of them, how will you endure when God shall do according to the word of his Messengers? Let such thoughts as these move you to prepare your selves, this use God would have these burdens attain, *Amos* 4. 12.

Of Dumah] *i.e.* Of the Land of *Idumea*, the place of the posterity of *Esau*, called *Edom*: these were, though of the posterity of *Abraham* and *Isaac*, yet a Nation rejected by God, and become an Heathen Nation; and yet God tells them aforehand what he intends against them, and condescends to give them a Warning to Repentance. Hence

Doct. *God, though grievously provoked, yet seldome brings desolating Judgements, before he gives warning.* *Edom*, though out of Gods Covenant, shall nevertheless hear from God before they feel his wrath, and *Babylon*, and *Arabia*, and *Tyre*, &c. as we finde scattered in the Prophesies, how much more a people in Covenant with him.

Reas. 1. Because this is the day of Gods forbearance, and therefore he will exalt it towards sinners, and make them to taste of it. It is the time wherein Justice is moderated by Mercy.

2. That sinners may have an opportunity to repent: when God speaks to them before he strikes them, he puts *a price into their hands*, if

if they have but *a heart to it*; hence God calls them to it. Text looks on it as such a season, *Rev.* 2. 21.

3. To take off all excuse in the day of Vengeance, that all mouthes may be stopt, sinners shall have nothing to say for themselves, as having been warned; they shall have no plea, shall not be able to say, *We never heard of it*: no cloak shall be left them.

Use. This may be a Rule to teach us what use to make of those manifold Warnings which God vouchsafes to afford unto us.

1. Hearken to his *Warnings*, hear his Threatnings, attend to them, and believe them.

Quest. *How doth God warn us?*

Ans. First, By his *Messengers*, these are Ambassadors, to declare the minde and counsel of God, and proclaim his Judgements.

Obj. *But Revelations cease, how then can they give us a true account of the minde of God, and his purposes of bringing Judgements on us?*

Ans. God gives a greater portion of his Spirit to his Ministers, then to others, and by that Spirit he extraordinarily

1. Stirs them up to a consideration of his minde and counsels: he directs their thoughts that way.

2. Discovers to them the sins of the times and places they live in, makes them to observe the frames and manners of the people he sends them to.

3. Enables them to compare his ancient dealings with sinners, in the several respects and circumstances, and hence to draw conclusions, and hence verifies that promise, *Amos* 3. 7. Now these Conclusions are *a sure word of Prophesie*: for

1. The Rule is standing, *Crying sins are answered with certain Judgement*. God is the same he was, his Holiness and Justice remain inviolable, and unchangeable, and therefore sinners have no hopes to escape, if they remain in their sins.

2. Like sins bring like Judgements; *Sodoms* sins are followed with *Sodoms* plagues; and therefore if our sins answer former times, we may expect our sufferings to be like theirs.

3. The Prophesies of the Prophets were cautioned with the condition of Repentance, either explicite, as appears by the invitations to repent annexed to their Threatnings frequently, or at least implicite, *Jer.* 18. 7, *&c.* so are theirs.

Secondly, By his *Providences*: gathering of Clouds, and some

drops

drops of rain presage a Storm, Signs speak, the Rod hath a voice in it, and may be heard, though it be but shaken over us.

2. Let the *Patience* of God break our hearts, and *lead us to repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. Remember, God might have stricken when he warned us; he might have made *our plagues seven times heavier*, when he did lay some gentler stroke upon us; he might have made haste, begun, and made an end with us in one day, after he had so long in patience waited upon us.

3. Give credit to *Gods Threatnings*, do not think he is in jest, look at such times wherein Ordinances and Providences concur in denouncing wrath against us, to be reall tokens of Divine Displeasure, and to have a loud voice in them; and therefore let it teach us to meet God, and that without delay.

He calleth, &c.] Here is the *question* or *Introduction* to the Prophesie.

He] i. e. Some Person, or Messenger.

Calleth] i. e. Comes to enquire.

To me] i. e. *Isaiah*.

Out of Seir] Mount *Seir* lying in the Land of the *Edomites*, is taken for the whole Land of *Idumea*.

Watchman, what, &c.] By Watchman is meant the *Prophet*, these are called *Watchmen* by God, because he sets them to discern his wrath, and give warning to the people. The meaning or intent of the *Question* is diversly understood: I finde a twofold interpretation.

1. Some take it to be an expression of the bitterness and anguish of the *Edomites*, concerning the future event of those troubles which were beginning upon them: it seems War was threatned by the *Assyrian*; through which anguish they send to the Prophet, to know what was likely to ensue, what troubles they should meet withall: for *Night* is here a Metaphor of the time of affliction, as it is often in Scripture, *Isa.* 26. 9, &c. and then the ingemination of the Interrogatory, implies an earnestness of desire to be informed.

2. Others understand it to be spoken in a flouting way, and so they call the Prophet *Watchman* by way of derision; as if they should say, *Isaiah*, you pretend to be a Watchman, and have foretold much of the time of trouble and desolation to come upon us, but we still enjoy the morning of prosperity, we are a free people, and not in subjection; come, what do you say to it now? Either interpretation will stand with the Analogie of Faith: though I think the latter to be

more

more suitable to the *Answer* given in the following verse; in which sense the doubling of the *Question* is an aggravation of the scoff in a sarcasmous speech.

From these words observe,

Doct. 1. *Times of Calamity are fitly compared to the night season.*

There is much of Analogie in these.

1. In the *night* nothing can be distinguished from the darkness, all things lye equally mantled under that black veil; hence the Grave is called *A land of darkness*, because all meet equally, and indistinguishably there: in times of Calamity the affliction is universal, good and bad are not to be distinguished by the outward face of Divine Providence, *Eccles.* 9. 1.

2. The *night* is a *joyless time*, darkness and obscurity hide from us objects of joy and mirth: in times of Calamity objects of joy are removed, these outward symptomes and expressions of delights and pleasures are removed, *Jer.* 7. 34.

3. The *night* is *full of terrour*, the darkness hath a kinde of influence upon our fantasie, leaving an impression of strange apprehensions, and possessing us with fears. Calamitous times are fearful and terrible times, fill us with suspitions, a man knows not whom to trust, lives in a fearful expectation of sudden miseries to seize upon him.

4. The *night* is a *solitary time*, breaks up societies, and scattereth them to their severall Chambers, to feed upon their melancholick thoughts and fears. Troublesome times bring places full of inhabitants to lie solitary.

Use I. See here a Reason why the people of God ought to do their utmost to prevent the day of Calamity: though they shall get good by all Providences, yet *no affliction is* in it self *joyous, but grievous*, and they shall finde a great deal of *night*, of trouble at such a time. Hence wonder not to hear them so earnest to deprecate that day, and labour so with God for a prevention of it. Christ himself, in whom was no sin, begs again and again, *if it be possible that the Cup might pass away* from him, how much more they that have sin as well as sorrow to grapple withall.

Use II. See here the Analogie between *Sin* and *Sorrow*, both are in Scripture called *darkness*: hence the punishment is suitable to the fault, God payes men in their own Coin, if men will hurry them-

selves into the shades of sin, God justly brings them into *a land of darkness, and of the shadow of death.*

Use III. This Consideration may warn us to have a care how we provoke Gods Judgements against us, to bring wrath upon us; we may be bold and fearless while the day time lasts, and our Sun of prosperity shines upon us, but if we pull down Judgements upon our heads, we shall finde the *night* to be

1. *Joyless*, we shall see the difference between joy and sorrow experimentally: when God shall have removed our comforts away from us, our peace, our outward supplies, all our precious things, we shall then feel what it is to be benighted.

2. *Terrible*, full of amazement. Ah! little do we know what the terrour of this *night* mean, to be oppressed with pining hunger, with pinching penury; to hear the cries of Children following us for bread, and none to give them; to hear the sound of the Trumpet, and Alarm to War; to hear the cries of the wounded, and see the slain in our gates; to see the raging of Famine and Pestilence, and natural affection changed into a Tyger-like Cruelty, tender-hearted Mothers shutting up their bowels of pity, and laying violent hands on the Children they have born; to go into Captivity, and serve an Enemy whose tender mercies are cruelty; to live in fear of every sight, every noise, lest it should be some messenger of Death, or that which is worse.

3. *Solitary* and lonesome, when you shall be made desolate, and like *Job*, who was made *a stranger to the wife of his bosome*; and hence you shall have that which will fill head and heart full of perplexity: how careful then should we be that we provoke not God against us, to bring darkness of adversity upon us.

Doct. 2. *'Tis the guise and disposition of the wicked, to despise and scoff at the Threatnings of Gods Judgement against them, especially if God delay execution.*

Thus the *Edomites* here, they had been threatned, but they yet were in peace, and though the Enemy was coming, they yet are secure. See also for this, *Eccles* 8.11. *Ezek.* 12.22. Poor sinning man, though he might reade the sentence of death in himself, yet is not willing to believe any evil till he feels it. If God delay, his Messengers presently are Liars.

Reas. 1. From the natural security which possesseth the hearts of the

the unregenerate: sinful man is naturally secure, which security ariseth from

1. Their not seeing and being affected with their sin, justly provoking of God, *Mal.*2.7. men grope in their darkness, and cannot see wherein they have done amiss. Men, especially if they have taken *a form of godliness*, and begin to be sticklers in Religion, they observe not that they want *the power*, and having taken up a good apprehension of themselves, the Word of Conviction passeth by as a thing in which they are not concerned. Hence they wonder that God should have any thing against them, they cannot believe it, and so they despise, and make a mock of those that tell them of Wrath against them.

2. Their misinterpretation of Gods patient dealing with them: Natural men make a God to themselves of their own Mindes, *Psal.* 50.21. if God delayes them, then presently he approves of their wayes, at least they must have him a God all of mercy, they exalt his Compassion to the injury and violation of his Holiness and Justice; and so, what should be a means of their Repentance, 2 *Pet.*3.9. is an occasion of their hardning.

3. Their false hopes and promises of their escape, their *Covenants with Hell and Death*, Isa.28.17,18. make all men (thriving in the world in a way of wickedness, and being rooted deep in their outward enjoyments) begin to account this a kinde of Deity to them, and hence build up their hopes and thoughts upon an unchangeable estate, *Psal.*49.11. and hence can disdain, and flout away the denunciation of a change.

*Reas.*2. Because their present prosperity so takes up their senses, that they despise God, no wonder then if they scoff at his Threatnings. *Pharaoh* sitting in the Pomp and Glory of the Crown of *Egypt*, demands, *Who is the Lord?* Natural men are ready to say (in times of prosperity) with *Niobe*,

Major sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere.

I am greater then the hand of Providence can reach to do any injury to, and hence beat a Challenge to the Almighty, *Job* 21.13,14.

Use I. See here a Reason why Gods Messengers are so slighted by a secure and prospering people: when they speak of dayes of wrath, men do not believe them, their Preaching is accounted as false tales & vain stories, why, men live at ease, and therefore they are accounted

fools that speak of a storm, and are made a *May-game* of, as they do here of the Prophet: and no wonder, for they do so by God himself, *I spake to thee in thy prosperity, and thou wouldest not hear.* Men are short-sighted, though they can discern the signs of Heaven, yet they are not willing to see any thing of the signs of Divine Displeasure, and if they see nothing, they will believe nothing, yea though they do see they are not willing to believe.

Use II. To convince us of, and humble us for even this very sin before God this day. God hath given *New-England* many dayes of prosperity, it hath been day with us a long time, but mean-while sin hath been growing upon us, and increasing, and Gods Messengers have dealt faithfully with us, and told us of it, and warned us by the clear demonstrations of the Word of God, that Judgements hang over our heads, but have not these Admonitions been despised and mocked by us?

Quest. *You will say, How?*

Ans. 1. Some have mocked them in plain terms, we have not been clear of this brazen-faced impudence, some to flout at the Warnings of God, yea to hate those that have been most serious in reproving our sins, especially that have pointed them out.

2. Others have not believed, and those not a few neither, but the most: we may almost use the Prophets demand, *Isa.* 53. 1.

3. Have not these Warnings been practically slighted and disregarded?

1. How few hearts have been affected? and not to be affected, is a degree of mocking: how few melting hearts? how few that hear and fear? how few tremblers at the Word of God? or that with old *Eli, sit by the way, trembling for the Ark of God?* We can sit under the Convictions of the Word, and no whit convinced; little remorse when these *burdens* are laid upon us, and we go away and *wipe our mouthes, and say, what have I done?* We (like deaf men) startle not when the Trumpet sounds, because we will not hear it.

2. What little care is there to return and meet God by repentance, and what is this better then to slight and mock God?

Obj. *But many dayes of Humiliation have been kept?*

Ans. True; and to what purpose?

1. Where is the Reformation that hath followed? in *Isa.* 58. the Lord owns that onely as a true Fast, which is a day of Reformation:

bare

but what hath been amended? if we were amiss before, we are so still, notwithstanding all that is made to appear to the view of the world: and this is a manifest mockery.

2. Have we not kept dayes to encourage our selves to sin more boldly upon a new score, with the Whore in *Prov.*7.14,15? thought to have cleared all old scores with God by an overly Confession, that so we might more securely run into new arrerages: and is not this a great mockery, to think to pay God with such counterfeit Coin? What have we to do then, but to confess and bewail this sin before God, and labour to amend it? For *Motives* Consider,

1. God will make you to know who sent these Messengers; that it was not of their own heads, nor on their own errands, that his Ministers came to you, but that it was from him, *Ezek.*2.5. and that you have not scoffed and neglected them, but God himself: you shall see this.

2. Gods patience hath a bounded time, *Hab.*2.3. God may delay long, he will not do so alwayes; know it, he is just as well as merciful: God will take a season, finde out a fit opportunity to be known in his Judgements upon those who despise his patience, and reject his counsels and fore-warnings, he *will not strive alwayes with man, who is flesh*, Gen.6.3.

3. Such a spirit will provoke God to make haste, *Ezek.*12.23. if God send, yea *rise up early and send*, and so far condescend to a rebellious people, as to send Messenger after Messenger, and Message upon Message, and these mocked and despised, that news quickly comes there is no remedy, 2 *Chron.*36.16. this ripens men apace for destruction.

4. Such a spirit is an immediate fore-runner of swift Calamity, 1 *Thess.*5.1— No surer and more infallible token of great Calamities to be hastning upon a people then this, when God tells them of trouble and calamity, they cry *Peace, Peace*, and lay themselves down (in despight of all Counsels and Warnings) upon the bed of Security, and take their ease in sin without remorse. Let us then be deeply affected with this evil, as knowing that there is nothing whereby we have more grievously provoked God, and vexed his Spirit, then by this: lye low before him in the sense of it, it may be he will pardon and forgive it.

Doct. 3. *It is no sure sign of a sincere heart, in times wherein Gods Judgements are felt or threatned, to be very inquisitive about them.*

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You see *Edom* here makes a great do of Enquiry: there is an hypocritical and false, and there is a sincere and true Enquiry made about divine Dispensations, and the one apparently, and to the view of the world, may be as earnestly pressed as the other.

Reas. 1. Because there are other things which may excite such an Enquiry, besides the fear of God; *viz.*

1. A natural fear, which may be stirred up at the first hearing of Threatnings, and discovery of tokens presaging Calamity; the sight of dismall Clouds, and the noise of some terrible Thunder-cracks, do at the first carry a kinde of consternation along with them: and this makes men, till by degrees they outgrow their affrightment, to be very sedulous to know what these things mean.

2. A naturally busie talkative spirit, that loves to be busie, talking and discoursing, many affect to be in discourse, and hence they enquire that they may have something to spend time in discourse.

3. A desire to be thought wise, discerning and prudent, hence men will enquire for light: we love to have the esteem for prudence and discretion, to be accounted men of discerning spirits, that observe and know the times, and hence take some pains in searching.

4. An ironicall and flouting spirit: such this seems to be in the Text, not that we have any true desire to know any thing, but in disdain of Gods Ministers: we enquire of them as for knowledge, but in the mean-while look upon them to have no more knowledge of the minde and counsel of God then our selves: with this spirit those *proud men* seem to have come to enquire of the Prophet, *Jer.* 43.

Reas. 2. Because there are other ends of such Enquiry, besides such as accompany sincerity; *viz.*

1. A bare desire of external knowledge and discourse: there is seated in man a great natural desire of the knowledge of the Nature of things, and that especially of future Contingencies; hence men take a great deal of pains, and busie themselves much in seeking to know such things, when it is to no other end but to know.

2. An intent to cavill at Gods dispensations, *Isa.* 58. 2. Some enquire to no other end, but that they may pick a quarrel with Divine Providence, and charge the wayes of God with injustice, as if they were wiser then God, as if he did not Rule the World by an equall Law.

Use 1. For *Triall*: there is much talk now a-dayes amongst us, about

about the Judgements of God, and those awfull Providences that are rolling over our heads: there is a great Enquiry made, but let us not think or conclude our selves ever the better, because we are among the number of those who are possibly the most forward upon this account, but examine our selves whether we do it in sincerity or in hypocrisie.

Signs of hypocriticall Enquiry.

1. When we enquire more after the *Events* of Calamity, then the Causes procuring of it: thus those *Idumeans, What of the night?* i. e. What is like to come upon us? So there is much enquiry, what the issue of these rolling Providences is like to be, what things are like to come to: but there are few say, What have I done? wherein is the Lords anger incensed, *&c?* this shews we are more afraid of sorrow then sin, when we look so much at the Rod, and not at the hand which wieldeth it: This argues a spirit of hypocrisie; for we neglect our work, which is to search and try our hearts, and meddle with Gods work, whose Soveraignty it is to rule and order the affairs of the whole World at his own pleasure.

2. When we enquire more after *Natural* then Spiritual *Causes*: we are very inquisitive to know what may be the *Natural Cause* of these Blastings which have for many years diminished and corrupted the best of our Grain; and hence, many projective endeavours in vain attempted to prevent it, by seeking to remove that Cause, which we are to this day baffled in, and as far off to seek as ever: but the Causes Spiritual (which are more manifest, and easie to be discovered) are slightly sought after, and so but little endeavour to remove them, hence no wonder that the Effect remains, we enquire in hypocrisie.

3. When we enquire, but 'tis without any desire or willingness to see the *true Reason* or *Causes*, or be convinced of them, we enquire with a kinde of fore-stalled and prejudicate spirit, we have taken up already what our determination is and must be: hence this it is, and no other thing, hence we arm our selves with a resolution to outstand all Conviction, and so lay a block in the way to prevent any efficacious meeting God in such a way as might remove his hand off from us, and prevent the process of more and worse miseries.

4. When we enquire, but never intend to *reform*: this was the enquiry of those, *Jer.* 43. their promises were indeed fair, but when the Prophet had gone to God and enquired for them, and brought them

them word back again, now they discover their hypocritical heart, *Chap.* 44. 16. they would make a formal kinde of process, as if they had been desirous of Gods counsel to direct them; and had the Answer been to their mindes, what godly men might they have past for: Hath God told *us* nothing? have not his Messengers pointed at something? have not the very Providences themselves given light to our enquiry? but all this while, where is the *amendment?* who turns from his evil way to the Lord?

5. When we enquire, but not of *Gods Watchmen:* times have been when they have been esteemed, and looked upon as Watchmen indeed, who were best able to inform us in the Counsels of God; but now who more blinde then they in our practical judgement? a prejudicial eye is cast upon them, and they laid by as useless. Oh how is the cavilling of an Anabaptistical and censorious spirit (who can spit his venom in the face of Magistracy and Ministry, and make these the Causes of all our Trouble) set by among many? whiles the faithful Warnings of Gods Servants are contemned.

6. When possibly we enquire of them, but with a *slighty* and disdainful *spirit:* Oh how many go with their nice Queries to their Ministers, when they despise them in their hearts? and either lay snares for them, as they dealt by Christ himself, *Is it lawful to pay tribute,* &c? or at least do not go to them as such whom they do indeed look upon and esteem to be sent of God, and therefore may hopefully expect to receive better information from them, then from others; hence they little regard, and less do they practice.

7. When we enquire, but we are not willing the Cause should be in *our selves,* but in others: and hence though we enquire with some earnestness, yet if the Answer (though true) touch us, and our Corruptions, we cannot bear it; this shews that we enquire with a censorious (which is an hypocritical) spirit: we regard not how much blame be laid upon others, but are willing to take none of the blame and shame of the sin to our selves, and therefore come not up to this, which is the onely sincere first Enquiry, *What have I done?*

Use II. To humble us for our hypocrisie upon this account, and how much cause the best of us may have to take the shame of this sin upon us before God this day, if we did seriously enquire, we might in some measure discover: let us then bewail it seriously. For *Motive:* Consider,

1. It

1. It is no light matter to mock God; so we do in every act of hypocrisie: *God is not mocked*, saith the Apostle; *i. e.* he will not be put off with, nor will he put up our mockeries.

2. God and *your sin will finde you out*: God discerns the heart, and therefore it is no mocking of him; he is *a jealous God*, and therefore he will make you to know how ill he takes it, he will smoke against your best services, that you may understand your hypocrisie is observed by him, *Isa.* 58. 1——

Thus much of the *Question* of the *Idumeans*.

The *Answer* of the Prophet follows. The Answer is *short and full*.

The Watchman] *i. e.* the Prophet *Isaiah*. *Isaiah* owns his Office, though they put it upon him as a scoff and mockery, but he is not ashamed of it in the least. Hence

Doct. *The Ministers of God are not ashamed of their Office, though the world seem to despise and flout at it.* Let the men of the world think never so undervaluingly of the Place and Work they are in, they yet prize and esteem it.

Reas. 1. Because it is an Office instituted by God, and therefore will be defended, and vindicated by him: he owns them, though the world despise them, and he will take upon him to plead the Cause of his despised Ministers.

Reas. 2. Because it is a high and honourable Office, though despised: let the world look upon it with an eye of disdain, yet it is in it self a dignity, an honour: Ministers *are Ambassadors from God to men*, 2 Cor. 5. 20. now the Majesty of the Prince is represented in the Ambassador, God looks that part of his own honour is engraven upon this Office, Ministers therefore have no reason to be discouraged by the contumelies of the world.

Reas. 3. Because it is a Work which is accompanied with the glorious power of God, and made a means of the Salvation of Gods Elect: this is *Pauls* reason why *he is not ashamed of the Gospel*, Rom. 1. 16. When they see God putting forth his power, and making the stoutest sinners fall (like the walls of *Jericho*) at the sounding of the Preaching of the Gospel, and many souls by their Ministry brought effectually home to God, this is enough to make them disdain the slanders and revilings of men, and glory in their Ministry.

Reas. 4. Because *its reward is with God*: Ministers look not for, nor would be satisfied with an earthly reward; *their praise is of God, and*

not of men; he hath promised *they shall not lose their reward*, and they dare trust him, and can chearfully endure, and meet with all that reviling and contempt which wicked men delight to be venting against them: the Crown will more then pay for all.

Use. Learn hence to have a care that you contemn not Gods Ministers, and above all the Office of the Ministry: doubtless the low esteem of this great Work appearing by too many evident symptomes, is one thing for which God is now pleading with us, and therefore seasonable at this time to be hinted to us. Oh beware of this sin. Consider,

1. If we despise them, we despise God, *Luke* 10.16. the Prince accounts all the affronts and indignities offered to his Ambassadors, to bear a proper respect to himself; and do you then think that God will bear it? *Moses* may hold his peace, Gods Ministers may pity and pray for you, yea will; but God will not suffer his own glory thus to be trampled upon, nor his Servants thus to be abused.

2. If we contemn them, and receive not their Ministry, it is the ready way to be given up by God to a spirit of delusion, 2 *Thess.* 2.10. Observe it, and you shall see, this hath been the door out of which so many have gone away into those giddy distempers which they are now infected withall, even those many Enthusiasms of the Devil; an undervaluing of the Ministry, an elevating and setting up private gifts, *&c.* which hath led men by degrees to those great Apostacies, whereby their light (which would have shone clearly in its proper Orb) hath spent it self in a blaze, and gone out in a stinking snuff.

The Watchman said] *i.e.* from God, and by his direction, we here see the Prophet gives them a serious Answer. Hence

Doct. *What-ever end a people have in enquiring, it is the duty of Gods Ministers faithfully to answer them according to the minde and counsel of God.* See *Jer.* 42. 19,20. the people they dissembled, but *Jeremiah* tells them the truth.

Reas. 1. From the nature of their Office, which is to be *Watchmen*, which depends not upon the acceptance, or not acceptance of their Message, but is an absolute duty, whose neglect cannot be dispensed withall: whether they will hear or no, *Ezekiel* must discharge his Office, *Chap.* 2.7. yea, it lyes so upon him, as the neglect of it brings him under the dreadfull menaces of Gods wrath, *Chap.* 2. 18. he breaks his charge if he neglect it, yea and hazards the undoing of those

those for whom he is set up to be a Watchman.

Reas. 2. Because God will have a rebellious people left inexcuseable, *Ezek.* 2. 5. though the prime end, and natural tendency of the Ministry, be for the Conversion and good of the people to whom they are sent, yet God in just judgement will sometimes have it to be to increase their Condemnation, and to make their misery more dreadful: *Line upon line*, &c. is sometimes given to make a people *stumble and fall*, *Isa.* 28. 13. all this is for Gods glory, the shine of the glory of his Justice, when he shall come to recover the honour of his despised Counsels and Warnings, and plead with a people for their wretched and inexcusable violation of both Covenants.

Use I. See here a reason why Gods faithful Ministers use so little humane policy in the execution of their Place and Office: should they connive at our sins, sew pillows under our elbows, fawn upon us, or at the least speak in the dark and aloof off, they were most likely, in an eye of humane Reason, to live more quietly, and less hated: he is ready to be accounted our enemy who tells us the truth. How easily might they accommodate themselves to humane affections, but they dare not do it, but speak plain; not because they are ignorant of the probability of what entertainment they are like to meet withall, but because they dare not to be false to the charge and trust which God hath laid upon them. I confess, concerning some things there may be an indiscreet zeal, in these there is a time to hold one's peace; but in the discovery of the Counsels of God, and laying open crying sins, &c. it's not the fear or favour of man, but the awful command of God, which must be, and is, the Rule of the serious Minister, who being sent from God, must deliver his Embassie.

Use II. Learn hence how faithful God is to us, how unfaithful soever we be to him, and to our own souls: might we have our own desires, we would hear nothing else but soothing and pleasant words; he that preacheth sin and wrath, is a Legallist, a *Micaiah*, he *never speaks good to us*; thus would we go sleeping and secure to Hell, run our selves jocundly into all misery, such enemies are we to our own souls: but how faithful is God, who seeing us falling into the seas of wrath, sends to awaken us out of our sleep, to tell us of our evil wayes, and to reclaim, and bring us back. That God hath ordained and set up the Office of the Ministry under that solemn and dreadful charge, As they will answer it in the great day, If they will not bring

the guilt of the blood of ſouls upon their own heads, to tell ſinners of their wayes, and give them ſeaſonable and conſtant warning; herein is the Faithfulneſs of God, and his great Goodneſs wondrouſly exalted.

Uſe III. Learn hence to account a plain-dealing Miniſtry to be of God, however they croſs our corruptions: if any in the world are indeed ſent of God to us, then ſurely thoſe, who laying aſide all ſelf-ends and worldly intereſts, lay themſelves open to the hatred and perſecution of the world, hazard to loſe our love and good will, to be evil ſpoken of, to ſuffer want, and hard uſage among us, rather then be ſilent in an evil day; rather then hold their peace, and let us alone in our ſins, or palliate and diſſemble with us in the Cauſe of God and our own ſouls. Pray to God that you may alwayes have and enjoy ſuch Miniſters, and that he would put this Spirit into his Ambaſſadors.

The morning cometh, and alſo the night] Here the Prophet anſwers them according to their particular enquiry about the ſucceſs. In which obſerve

1. A Conceſſion; *The morning cometh:* It is true indeed, you do for the preſent enjoy a ſeaſon of proſperity, though evil have been denounced againſt you; and it cometh ſtill, *i. e.* you have ſtill a ſhort ſeaſon behinde of day.

2. A Warning; *and alſo the night:* i. e. as you have your *morning*, ſo aſſure your ſelves you ſhall have your *night*; think not, nor deceive your ſelves into ſuch a fooliſh hope, as to promiſe your ſelves you ſhall never ſee adverſity, becauſe you now live at eaſe and proſper.

3. The words carry in them the face of an Argument: he compares their condition to a *Natural day*, in which there are two conſtituting parts, *viz. Day* and *Night*, *light* and *darkneſs*, which naturally follow one upon another: the *day* of the people of God uſually (as the Natural day) begins with *darkneſs*, and ends in *light*; the wickeds day begins with *morning*, but ſhall end with *night*. Hence if they look for *night* to follow the cleareſt day, why do they dream as if ſorrow could not come in the room of their preſent pleaſure and delight? Hence

Doct. 1. *God may afford a ſinning people, a people deſigned for wrath, a long morning of proſperity.* *Edoms Morning cometh*, endureth a great while: God thus ſpared the *Amorites* an hundred and fourty years,

years, bare with the *old World* an hundred and twenty.

Reaſ. 1. Becauſe this is the day of Gods forbearance: God is perfectly juſt, and he ſhall be known to be ſo in the day of vengeance, when the great Aſſizes ſhall be ſet, and he ſhall render unto every one according to their works; but mean while he hath a day of mercy, wherein (without any infringement to his Juſtice and Holineſs) he moderates the Sentence paſt upon ſinners, and delayes the full execution of it, mean-while conferring much of his goodneſs upon them. Now the ſeaſon of the ſhine of this Attribute of Mercy, appearing in his Clemency and Benignity, is properly here in this world: God will have the glory of all his Attributes ſhine out and appear in his *Efficiency*; now there is no room for, nor knowledge of his Patience, Long ſufferance, and Goodneſs in Hell, where the Cup of Wrath is without mixture: God therefore now makes it *appear in the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction*, Rom. 9. 22.

Reaſ. 2. Becauſe God hath in his Decrees, not onely laid men out for puniſhment, but for their meaſure and degrees of puniſhment, which they come to by the height of their ſin, and by the number of Mercies abuſed: this is an awful, but an undeniable Truth, That God hath not onely deſigned ſuch ſinners to deſtruction, but hath allotted them their place in Hell; *Judas* is gone to *his place*: there is a Hell more and leſs tolerable, *Mat.* 11. 15. as alſo that men come to this, by their abuſing and miſimproving of mercies, *Rom.* 2. 5. hence therefore ſinners muſt have ſuch a time of Patience, ſo many Mercies, *&c.* beyond which, as they ſhall not be ſpared, ſo before which they ſhall not be diſturbed, but ſet alone till their meaſure be fulfilled, till they are ripe, and fully fitted to deſtruction, *Gen.* 15. 16.

Uſe I. Learn hence, that outward proſperity is no ſure token of Gods ſpecial favour, *Eccleſ.* 9. 2. a perſon or people may have and enjoy the worlds abundance, and over flow in the outward things of this life, and yet be the hated of God, ſuch whom God turns like Oxen into a rich Paſture, where they may be fatted up for the ſlaughter-houſe of Hell: reckon not therefore upon this. Have any of you eſcaped the common Calamities which God hath been bringing upon this Land? do not ſooth up your ſelves with this, and pleaſe your ſelves into an opinion that God loves you ever the better; a dear childe of God may be under the moſt ſevere chaſtenings, while thou that art not chaſtiſed mayeſt be a baſtard.

Vſe II. This may call us all to a ſerious and ſolemn Examination of our ſelves, what uſe we have made of thoſe many dayes of proſperity which we have had: it is not enough that we have had them, but how have we improved them. Know it, the day of Reckoning is coming, and then an account will be taken, when the more any have received, the more they will have to anſwer for. We have been a people wonderfully favoured by the Lord, but let not this make us ſecure; who knows but we have turned Gods great Mercies into great Curſes by abuſing of them: 'tis time then (now God is coming to recover his Mercies out of our hands) to ask our own hearts, whether we have not highly abuſed, yea ſo that if Repentance prevent not, to our final deſtruction.

Doct. 2. *A people in the very height of outward proſperity, may be very near to ruine and deſtruction.* The Prophet ſpeaks here quick, as of ſudden Changes, *The morning comes, alſo the night*; intimating, as if there ſhould be no long diſtance between their morning and night, as if it ſhould be a ſhort morning, a day ſoon changed into night. You remember how it was with the *Old World*, and with *Sodom*, who were taken in the height of their pleaſures, in the top of their proſperity, and ſuddenly brought to a final end, and fearful deſolation; and our Saviour Chriſt ſpeaks of ſuch times in the dayes of the Goſpel, *Luke* 17.26, &c.

Reaſ. 1. Becauſe ſuch dayes ripen men faſter for deſtruction, *Rom.* 9.22. the more men have, and abuſe, the deeper they run into Gods debt-book, the larger accounts they have: the better the Paſture is, the ſooner the Ox is fat; now you know the Ox is not taken from his Paſture, till ſuch time as the day of ſlaughter comes, hence God takes men in their height, and makes them come down wonderfully.

Reaſ. 2. From the nature of Patience, which as it can bear and endure a great deal, and a long while, ſo when it once comes to be worn out, and provoked, breaks forth into a moſt ſudden and direful flame: *Læſa patientia fit furor*; *Jer.* 4.4. That anger which is not ſuddenly and ſpeedily ſtirred up, when kindled is moſt furious and unappeaſeable.

Reaſ. 3. From the nature of ſin, which the more goodneſs of God it enjoyes, the more it heightens it ſelf into boldneſs and violence: *Sodoms fulneſs* (which called to glorifie God) was an occaſion of the *crying ſins* that were among them; hence they pull down wrath, and there is no remedy.

Vſe.

Use. This may convince us of a great deal of the Goodneſs and rich Mercy of God expreſſed to us-ward in this very thing, in that he hath not brought our Calamity and Deſolation on us all at once, but hath come by degrees, he hath not dealt with us as with *Sodom*, whoſe deſolation came in a day, ſudden as a Whirlwind; whoſe morning was fair and clear, who ſaw the Sun ſhine upon them, the ſame day wherein they were overwhelmed with a ſtorm of Fire and Brimſtone. Our Sun hath been obſcured, our day brought to the twilight, before ſudden and thick darkneſs: theſe are tokens of Gods long ſuffering and great favour towards us; hereby God gives us further warning, and more ſpace to repent. Oh let us then make this uſe of it; God ſhews by this that he is willing to be ſtopt in his way, to accept the ſacrifices of an humble ſpirit.

Doct. 3. *God would have us in the Morning to think of Night.* Whiles times of peace and plenty continue, God would that we bethink our ſelves of a change, *Eccleſ.* 11. 8. God would have theſe *Edomites* to conſider that *Night* would come after their *Morning* was over.

Reaſ. From the ſutableneſs and ſeaſonableneſs of theſe thoughts at ſuch a time.

1. The ſerious conſideration of it may be a means to prevent it: by *removing the Cauſe, the Effect ceaſeth*; God brings ſorrow for ſin, Repentance ſtops him in his courſe, and brings back his favour. A wiſe and holy improvement of the day of Gods goodneſs and favour, cauſeth the Sun to ſtand ſtill in our Firmament, and the day of proſperity to laſt: but the ſinful abuſe of it haſtens the ſetting of our Sun, and coming of the black and dark night; now to think of this beforehand, affords us a ſolemn and awakening Motive carefully to improve our time of viſitation, whereby we may enjoy a bleſſed lengthening out of our tranquillity.

2. The due improving of theſe thoughts may be a means to fit us for the *Night*: Fore-warned (as we ſay) and fore-armed; the expectation of ſtorms and tempeſts, drives perſons to ſeek a ſeaſonable ſhelter and hiding-place from the wind and rain: this makes ſerious ſouls prepare *to meet with their God.* They that never think nor conſider of a change, never think of being *emptied from veſſel to veſſel*, are like *fiſhes taken in an evil net*, are horribly unprepared; but the ſerious expectation of dayes of Calamity, will drive us (if any thing) to make our peace with God, to take up our ſhelter under the wings of the

Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, that the evil of these evils overtake us not.

3. These thoughts will make us wise to improve our *morning* to the best advantage: when we see night coming, and a great deal before us to do, this doubles our diligence, whiles many times we idle away much of the day, as long as we think it a great while to night; as long as we apprehend the Sun to be in its height, we sleep, but when it is near setting, then we redeem the time. Oh how laborious Christians should we be, how sedulous in the work of God, if we did but carry along with us in our mindes the thoughts of the *evil day*, did we but with a cautious expectation every day look for a change!

Use I. See here how grievously they provoke God, who in the day of their prosperity minde nothing but their ease and pleasure, *Amos* 6. 1— it is an infquity which God cannot bear, as follows in the sequel: it is a note of a *wicked man*, when he enjoyes the favour of God, so do nothing but spend his dayes in mirth; there are *the afflictions of Joseph* to minde, yea also and our own change to minde: what was the ground of *Jerusalems* destruction but this? *Lam.* 1. 9.

Use II. This may be for *Direction* to us, what use to make of the consideration and fore-thoughts of the *night of Trouble*, in a few things:

First, Consider what just reason we have to expect *a night*, a change, more sorrows still; *viz.*

1. The grievous loss of precious time in the best. Oh how much of our time here have we wasted away, *aliud agendo*, in that which profits not. None in the world ever enjoyed a happier advantage to serve God in, then we have done for so long a season in this Wilderness, wherein we have enjoyed peace, and the liberties of the Gospel, liberty to be as good as we will, and all encouragements to serve God; but oh how much have we been wasting away unprofitably, in Contentions, and busie Wranglings about matters of an inferiour consideration, about our worldly Cares and Perplexities, *&c.* We have used but little care to redeem those precious hours from those encompassing vanities which beset us.

2. Hainous provocations of Gods wrath in many, which may make God say of us as of *Israel*, that *we press him as a Cart is pressed with the sheaves.* Oh how many crying sins have been found among us? Should God come and plead with us, (and indeed so he doth, and hath been

been pleading with us a great while) and reade over to us a Bill of our several *Items*, how few need he leave out of those drawn up against *Jerusalem*, in that heavy Accusation recorded *Esay.* 22. 14. I need not mention in particular, Crying sins have been found, and are prevailing, and shall not God visit for these things? will he not be avenged on such a people, who promised, and gave him hopes of better things?

Secondly, Consider what Warnings God hath given us.

1. In the *Ministry*: Hath it not been the voice of God in the mouth of all his Prophets, hath there not been a full and universal consent of all Gods Messengers, that *God hath a Controversie with his people, and cannot be silent?* How long hath this been a Conclusion, and they have been faithful to discharge their duty, and acquit their Consciences on this account by declaring it: this we have heard often proclaimed, and by sound demonstration cleared to us, but we have made too light of that, Ministers must say something to keep up their credit, and keep the people in awe. And therefore

2. God hath warned us in his *Providences*, that so he might make us believe his Word in the mouth of his Messengers: and that not only by many Signs and Prognosticks, usual forerunners of calamitous times, but also by the *Vaunt-Courriers* of his Army of Judgements, beginnings of sorrows; many have been the sad and awakening Providences of these latter years, he is a stranger in our *Israel* who is unacquainted therewithall. If we will not credit the Word, yet let us believe the Rod; if in the *Morning* we have been easily deluded into false and vain hopes, to think it would never be *Night*, yet one would think, when the Sun seems to be setting in our Horizon, and the dusk of the Evening is coming upon us, we should now be ready to give credit to it, unless we are fallen into a Lethargie, and dead sleep of Security.

3. Now let us bethink our selves how it may be prevented: to what end should we be warned, but that we might endeavour to prevent and escape the drinking the dregs of this Cup, whereof we have been already made to sip?

1. Believe that God is yet willing to be stopt, he shews how unwilling he is to afflict, and therefore is ready to be stayed. God loves to be hindred in these proceedings, he himself looks to see if there be any *to stand in the gap, and make up the breach*, and he *is grieved when*

heaven finde none; this is encouragement; *The God of Israel is a merciful God*, and will be ready to extend that mercy to us, notwithstanding any advantage he hath in his hand against us: he therefore (when in the midst of Judgements) swears, that he *delights not in the sinners death*, and calls upon them to return to him, *Ezek.* 36 11.

2. Improve the means of prevention that are appointed by God: as there is a possibility of stopping the process of Gods wrath, so there is but one onely way whereby it can be done, and that is by returning by a thorow Repentance, by a confessing and forsaking those sins that pull down wrath; we must *confess*, that he may be acknowledged Just; we must *forsake*, because the Cause must be taken away before the Effect cease.

4. Prepare that if the *Night* come you may make advantage of it for your good: though the Night hath many sad disadvantages, yet it hath its advantages too; though it pay the sluggard with shame, yet to him that hath done his work, 'tis sweet, and helps his rest: if it finde you *in a way of righteousness*, it can do you no hurt, it shall do you a great deal of good. Oh prepare, get your sins pardoned and done away, if the guilt of these remain, they will interpose as a thick and dismall Cloud, between the light of Gods countenance and your souls, then it will be a black and dark night indeed: get into Christ, make him your shelter and rock, he is a sure refuge, and the tempest cannot break through him to do you any harm, though it should bear down, and wash away the *clay house of your earthly tabernacle*, yet it cannot keep you from, but will hasten you to a more speedy possession of your Eternal Mansion, your house of rest, *whose builder and maker is God*.

If ye will enquire, enquire ye;] The Prophet having answered their *Question* about the Events of Providence, and confirmed his forewarnings, by taking off the objection from present prosperity, and ascertained them of the hastening of their Calamity, being desirous to prevent their utter desolation, addes a word of serious advice to them from God, wherein he tacitly reproves the hypocrisie of their former inquisitiveness, and calls up to sincerity in their enquiring. Hence

Doct. 1. *Hypocritical service is in Gods account no service.* Edom makes a seeming enquiry, but they did it not in earnest, hence the Prophet speaks of it as no enquiry at all. The *Jews* fasted much, and wept

were angry that God did not answer them, that their affliction still remained on them; God tells them he looked upon it as no Fast, *Isai.* 58. 3.

Reas. is, Because it

1. Comes not from a right principle; Grace, which onely can do any thing acceptably to God: where there is not this, the Sacrifice is an abomination. That which hath the matter of visible service in it, is looked upon as the greatest sin, *Isa.* 66 2.

2. Is not done in a right manner, *viz.* Sincerity of heart. God requires the heart in every service, for that commands all the faculties, and what way that goes, thither indeed all aim; hence the complaint is, *Their heart was not upright toward God.*

3. Neither doth it aim at the right end, *viz.* the glory of God: this is the end of all true service, to bring glory to our Maker, and if this be not our aim and end, God is not indeed served in it. Now every hypocritical service wants all these ingredients, and therefore is not a serving of God, hence no wonder if he do not accept it.

Use. This may be for Tryal, to see whether our services and enquiries have not been hypocritical, whether or no we have not drawn *near to God with our lips, whiles our hearts have been far from him*? Surely there is great reason why we should make such an enquiry as this is, if we consider what effects have followed upon our fastings.

1. How little fruit of Reformation hath there been on our part? what one thing hath there been amended? what publick sin hath been reclaimed? is there ever the less vanity, pride, profaneness, oppression, contention? or do not these and the like evils seem rather to increase and grow more after all? and is not this a note of hypocrisie, to confess, and seem to bewail, and yet not to amend, but grow worse?

2. Wherein hath there been a removal of the Rod on Gods part? do not our calamities seem to increase, and the stroke to be more and more heavy? we lost many Instruments of the glory of God, and suffered many bodily Calamities, and Blastings of our labours, and we have fasted, but *his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*, yea more varieties of sorrows are heaped upon us: we may therefore well examine our own hearts, what is the reason of all this, unless we have not yet indeed turned to him who smote us, the Lord our God.

Doct. 2. *Whatsoever pretence we make, yet God knows with what heart we come to him, to ask counsel and direction from him.* The *Idumæans* seem earnest and urgent, but yet the Lord tells them that they make none (*i.e.* no acceptable) enquiry.

Reas. From his Omniscience, *Psal.* 94. 8. *Heb.* 4. 13. he is the heart maker, and therefore hath the power of discerning the heart, and all the motions and turnings of it; all the nooks and corners of it are open: it is so full of deceitfulness, that we cannot know it throughly, but he perfectly and exactly views, and discerns it; if he did not know the secrets of our hearts, if any thing were hid from him, he were not God.

Use. Learn hence that you cannot deceive God, man you may put off with fine words and fair pretences, but not so God: hath not God made it to appear that he will not be mocked by us? we have offered up to him hypocritical services, and accordingly we have been paid: we come with an Idol in our heart, and he hath answered us according to our Idol. Let us then look to our selves, and beware how we come before him, with what heart we come into his presence: know it, if *we sow wind, we shall reap the east-wind*; we may think to deceive and put him off with our mockeries, but he observes and takes notice even of those thoughts, and will make us to see and feel that he is displeased with them: *Bring* then *no more vain oblations*; offer up no more heartless sacrifices to him, but come loathing our selves, taking the true shame of our sins, and with a real desire to be rid of them, and we shall be accepted.

Doct. 3. *Those that would be instructed by God, in the grounds of his quarrel, and means of restitution, must enquire in good earnest.* God loves not this hypocrisie, and if we bring it, he will answer accordingly, *Ezek.* 14. 4. God may indeed answer those that enquire in hypocrisie, but it is an unwelcome answer he gives them, *viz.* a confirmation, and a ratifying of his Threatnings, and an assurance of the fulfilling of them: All the news that *Edom* hears, is, That their *Night* shall come on them, the evil determined shall be brought to pass against them: but God gives an answer of peace onely to those that enquire in sincerity.

Reas. 1. Because this hypocrisie is one great reason of the continuation of Gods anger, and therefore must be renounced, before God will accept of us when we come to enquire of him. *Jer.* 3. 1. they

had sinned, and God had afflicted; they had fasted, and God had added to their affliction, and they now would know a reason of this: why, the iniquity of their fasting procured them this; *Is this such a Fast as I have required?* hence God direct them how to fast aright, in the sequel. *Judah* had been full of visible services, but God was wrath, *Isa.*1. he tells them how they should come and reason out the case with him, and enjoy pardon and mercy at his hands, *ver.*16,17.

*Reas.*2. Because there can be no hope of true Reformation, where there is not sincerity in the enquiring: if we enquire hypocritically, we cannot intend really to repent; for the very first step to repentance, is a serious search and enquiry into our hearts and wayes, *Lam.* 3.40. Those proud men, *Jer.*43. they come in hypocrisie, and hence when they have an answer from God, and are counselled for their good, they take up a resolution that they will not do according to the word of the Lord.

Use I. for *Tryall*: Let us examine whether this be not the reason why God hath not yet made us to see, and be sensible of the grounds of his Contest with this poor Land. This is the great and general complaint, We have fasted and prayed, sought and enquired, but his hand is stretched out still, and he is yet pleased to hide the reason from us, and not to let us know why he contendeth with us. Oh, do not charge God foolishly of injury or hard dealing: God, though he be Soveraign, and *not bound to give an account of any of his matters*, yet he is a gracious God, and vouchsafes to the humble soul to make a discovery of his Counsels, would we know why God hides his minde from us; look upon our selves, did we ever yet enquire in good earnest? Gods hand hath been heavy on this account upon us.

1. In some things God hath divided the Apprehensions of his Messengers, as is too manifest and apparent; and this is your triumph, which ought to be your sorrow, for if in any point *the Trumpet give an uncertain sound*, yours is the suffering like to be, and yet this is a general out-cry, *What do you expect from us? what do you think we should do, when our Ministers are not yet agreed.* Well, it is a humbling thought, but do not wash your hands, and wipe your mouthes, as if you were clean in this point, but be humbled, you may finde the root and cause of the affliction in your selves; if you sought God in good earnest for your Ministers, and so prayed for them as you ought to do, and seriously begged of God to give them one heart, there would be greater concord among them.

2. In

2. In other things there is a general Consent and Agreement among Gods Ministers, but the people of God are divided in apprehension: and hence a check in many places put to the comfortable carrying on of the Work of Reformation; some are of one minde, some of another; some consent with, and other dissent from the Messengers of God, and hence are ready to charge each other mutually as the causes of our Calamity: and what's the reason of these *divisions in Reuben*, but that we have enquired of God with an Idol in our hearts? We first take up Conclusions that we are in the right, and all others out of the way that are different from us, and then, with these Conclusions we go to God, and make as if we enquired of him.

3. In other things all agree as to the Theory, *viz.* as to many Moral Causes and Occasions, which are justly provoking to God to bring a Scourge upon us: Who agrees not that Pride, Profaneness, Contention, *&c.* are things which provoke Gods anger, and cause him to smoke against a people in the fire of his displeasure? yea, who agrees not that these sins are prevailing and increasing among us? and yet we little reform these things in our selves, neither are we satisfied in our enquiry, but still remain querilts, and why? we still enquire hypocritically: this may be matter of humiliation this day, among others let us not forget to bewail this sin in the presence of God, and beg of him to give us grace to seek him so as we may be heard by him, and he found by us.

Use II. for *Exhortation:* We come this day humbly to ask of God what his minde is, why he is offended at his people, and seems to be unwilling to be pacified, and to be angry at our requests; why, *if you will enquire, enquire:* if you would be satisfied, and receive an answer of peace at Gods hands, come in good earnest, and God shall satisfie you this day: none ever asked counsel of him with a true and sincere heart, but was satisfied. For your help herein by way of Direction in this great business, if you would receive help and counsell from God, then

1. Lay down your own judgements and wills at the foot of God, there are many that bring a fore-stalled judgement, and will (as we heard) take up their rash Conclusions, according to their own opinions, and resolve never to be moved from them: this provokes God to leave us up to be seduced by our own delusions. Empty your selves therefore of your own wisdome and will, that you may be ready to entertain his.

2. Make

2. Make the Word of God your Rule of enquiry, make that your Light and Lamp to lead you in your search after the Causes of Gods displeasure: go not by humane policy, or carnal reason, or other mens judgements and apprehensions, which are fallacious; no, *let God be true, and every man a lyar.* Compare we our selves by his Word exactly, by the Rule, and by Examples, and let Conscience be an impartial Judge, and doubtless we shall discover more then a little.

3. Come with an humble heart, prepared to submit to whatsoever God shall discover. Consider, many things have been told you, but they have met with, and crost your corruptions, and so you have rejected them: a proud heart is never like to be so familiar with God as to be instructed by him, he sees such at a distance: would you have God to teach you, submit humbly to his teaching.

1. If the sin fall upon you in particular, be ready to take the shame of it: if while thou art standing before God, asking him by whom, and for what he is provoked? if he answer, *Thou art the man*, for these and those things he is provoked and offended; why, now *lay thy mouth in the dust*, reply not against him. While the sin is laid upon others, and it toucheth not us, as we conceive, or at least onely our natural infirmities, *&c.* we are well pleased; but when our sores come to be opened, rubbed and chafed, why then we kick, and fling, and rage, and grow mad. Avoid this frame, and bear patiently to be laid open and reproved.

2. If the Command laid upon you be never so cross, be ready and willing to obey it: it may be, that which God expects may be exceeding averse, an Opinion which thou hast been long rooted and riveted in, and dwelt upon with great confidence; a sin which hath brought thee in a great deal of profit, credit, or the like: the thing which God commands may seem to carnal Reason unreasonable, *&c.* now a proud heart will fling away; but have a care thou bring not such an heart before the great *Searcher of hearts*: Come, able in some measure sincerely to say, *Speak Lord, thy Servant heareth, Command me what thou wilt, I am ready to obey and follow thee.*

4. Begin at home in your enquiry: be sure search your own hearts in the first place, whether the *Achan*, the *troubler of Israel* be not lodged in your own breast. We keep a great deal of do abroad, searching, enquiring, censuring, as if we were true men to God, and resolved to find out the sin; but we are like some treacherous Constable,

that

that hath a Warrant to search for a Malefactor, he is very busie and strict in his Office, searcheth and ransacks every house in the Town, pries into every corner, as very desirous to finde him out, and bring him forth, and yet mean-while he lyes hid at home in his own house: Oh! this will never do, if thou knowest any sin harboured in thy heart, lie not to God by thus enquiring, nay if thou do but suspect it, let that be enough to cause a search: and to that end examine all thy wayes and actions, and see whether they have not been provoking to God; examine them throughly.

1. In the matter of them, see whether thou hast not fallen short in many things of the letter of the Law, committed those very sins, neglected those very duties, which the least light of Conscience might have convinced thee to be thy duty to be done or avoided.

2. In the Circumstance of thy actions.

1. Of *time*, a thing beautiful in its season; unseasonable, is ugly and deformed: hast thou taken the seasons of Christian duties? hast thou spoken against thy neighbours sins plainly, to his face; privately, or not rather behinde his back, slanderously reviling him, *&c?*

2. Of *place* or *persons*: *David* would *hold his tongue in presence of the wicked*; how many times hast thou failed of due consideration, when, or before thou hast thus done, or thus said.

3. In the *manner* of the carriage of your selves: it may be you have for the *matter* attended your duty, but have you for the *manner* too? have not you run out of your duty, and run into sin upon this account? have you not under pretext of zeal for Gods glory, and upholding his Name and Honour, given the reins into the neck of unruly passions, and with *Moses* spoken unadvisedly; yea worse then he, raged, reviled, *&c?* Examine every thing, and possibly God may discover to you more of this mischief lodged in your own heart, then ever yet you were aware of.

Obj. *But general visitations, argue a general provocation, and therefore they argue that we must look abroad.*

Ans. The Objection hath nothing in it to impair the necessity of the duty urged in the Direction, at such a time as this: for,

1. Sometimes a private person may be the occasion of a general and publick Calamity: *Achan* is *the disturber of Israel*; *Israel* is charged with his sin, and *fly before their enemies*: we reade of nothing else that the Lord charges upon them, but onely his sin.

2. General

2. General is made up of particulars, and thou art one of those particulars, and therefore mayest well examine thy self upon the account of publick and general visitations. If every one should so excuse themselves, where should the sin be found? God saith, *In thee are found such, &c.* Ezek. 22. he doth not there lay every particular sin upon all, yet all these went together to make up the provocation of Gods wrath, and procure their publick Calamity.

3. Thou it may be art a private person, and therefore canst do but little upon a publick account but by thy prayers; labour therefore to do the more with thine own heart. God hath not set every man in such a place, wherein he is called to busie himself in matters of publick concernment, these belong to persons in publick employment, whom we can onely assist by our prayers, or a detection and discovery of such particular enormities as we are privy to, that they may receive their due reward, and sin may be taken out of *Israel*: but we have the more scope and opportunity to be searching our own hearts, and if we neglect that work, we do little or nothing.

4. Thou art not fitted to look abroad, till thou hast first made a thorough work at home, *Mat.* 7. 1 — Thou art like to make but poor work in publick matters, whiles thou harboureſt sin in thine own heart; if therefore thou hast a desire to do God service upon that account, thou hadst need to be more then ordinarily careful to clear thy own accounts with God, lest thou be found guilty of hypocrisie. It will be found the ready way to bring thy self under inexcusable Condemnation before God, to search after and condemn those sins in others, which thou thy self liveſt in the daily practice of, *Rom.* 2. 1. thou must therefore prepare thy self to this work by a thorough search of thy own heart.

5. Particular Repentance goes before general mercies, *Zech.* 11. 9. if God intend good to this poor Land he will bring us to this, he will make us get alone, and every one lay his finger upon his own sore, and mourn over our sins wherewithall we have been provoking his Majesty: and when he hath once brought us to that, the time of his gracious visitation is near at hand; yea, that indeed is the first great mercy, for which let us this day seek his face.

5. Reform according to thy ability, and where thou canst not reform, there mourn.

First, Reform according to thy latitude.

1. Reform thy own soul by due discipline towards it, here thou canst not be too strict and severe, let the search be thorough, and the reformation universal: mortifie thy lusts and corruptions, ransack and cleanse every corner of thy heart, let none of thy Idols remain, but put them all away; resolve with *Ephraim*, that thou wilt have no more to do with them, *Hos.* 14.8. and beg of God grace that thou mayest stand to thy resolutions.

2. Reform others that are under thy charge, as far as thou canst do thy best, say to thy Children, as *Jacob* to his sons, *Put away every one from among you his strange gods*: *Joshua*, you know, could undertake not onely for himself, but for his too, *and my house will serve the Lord*: be sure to reform them as to the outward man, you can indeed do no more, but be sure do that. Content not your selves to give them some slighty reproofs for their sins, that was *Eli*'s sin, which removed his family from the Priesthood, but make use of that authority which God hath put into your hands, as occasion may require, and then commend the success to God.

3. Pray to God that he would

(1) Give and continue an endeavour after Reformation to the Magistracy and Ministry, and give them an advantage, and encourage them in that Work. Bless God in as much as you see their hearts towards the Work, beg of him that he would remove all obstacles and hindrances out of the way, that there may be a thorough and glorious Work of it. Oh be earnest with God for this, without it we have but little hopes to see any more good dayes.

(2) Give a spirit of Reformation to all his people, that such a work may be universally consented to, that we may all set our hearts and shoulders to the Work; doubtless there is no greater good we can beg for at the hands of God at this time.

Secondly, Where thou canst do no good, there mourn: beg of God to give thee a spirit of mourning for all the sins of the Land. We finde this spirit to have been eminent in good *David*, Psal. 119.136, 158. and it is that, which (if it tend not to the prevention of publick Calamity, yet) will bring a private blessing along with it, such shall not be forgotten in the day of Calamity, but be noted for mercy, *Ezek.* 9.4.

6. Let thy further enquiry be accompanied with amendment of what is at the present discovered, that is the way to know more, to be faithfull

full in a little, is the way to be trusted with more. If I mistake not, I have now my finger upon the right Sore. I may say indeed this is *New Englands* great disease; God hath begun in his Judgements to visit us, and there is a great deal of enquiry after the Cause: Gods Ministers endeavour faithfully to discover it, and yet still we are querists; Divine Providence speaks, and points at many things evidently, and still we are where we were; we acknowledge many things, and grant them to be amiss, and yet still the cry is, *what's the reason?* God is pleased to hide the reason: and why? why, men cannot see wood for trees: if we wait for immediate Revelations, we may wait long enough, there is no expecting of one to come from the dead to tell us. Indeed we can hardly look any where, but we may see causes apparent.

1. Let every private person look at home, take an account with his own heart, and he shall see enough to mend there. Out of doubt, if we deal here ingenuously, we shall finde that which may teach us to justifie God, and declare him righteous in what concerns us.

2. Look into Families, and see what disorders there are, Children rising up against Parents, and carrying themselves disobediently, which hath a dreadful Curse denounced against it: Parents neglecting the due care of their Children, to *nurture and bring them up in the admonition of the Lord*, cockering and making them their equals, not keeping their due distances, and too many families without the Worship of God in them, being more like Pagan, then Christian houses.

3. Look into Towns, and there you shall see disorders, young men despising the aged, and carrying themselves contemptuously to them, vanity and prophaneness abounding, selfish spirits upon the most, together with a neglect of one another's good, that love which is due one to another wholly in many neglected. Town-Societies rent in pieces with disorderly Contention.

4. Look into Congregations, and there you shall see confusions; some contending with their Ministers, and others biting and catching at one another; some not agreeing about the setting up of the Ordinances of God among them, and others not contented when they have them, but pulling them down again with might and main; great emulations, jealousies, false surmises, &c. Ministers despised, their Office questioned, their Authority cast off, and trampled upon, their persons undervalued and vilified, their comfortable Supply and Maintenance neglected, Ordinances not frequented with care and constancy, &c.

5. Look into the Body Politick, or Civil State, and there you ſhall ſee the Sinews of our Civil Society wondrouſly looſened: the want of Power in the Supreme Repreſentative Body to ſtrengthen them, by reaſon of the neceſſary evils incident to a declining Popular Government; and hence ariſe many misbehaviours, which time forbids to mention.

6. Look into the Body Eccleſiaſtical, and there you ſhall ſee Churches, ſome ready to exalt themſelves above the Civil Magiſtrate, and diſowning his Civil Power in matters appertaining to Godlineſs; others ready to renounce Conſociation and Communion one with another, and many the like: and yet we ſtill enquire, *what's the reaſon? Why is God diſpleaſed?*—Why, is all this nothing! yes ſure: why, who knows not that theſe are our diſtempers?

Obj. *But there is ſome particular thing which muſt be known, and this is either in Magiſtrate, or Miniſters, or both: when ſhall you finde in Scripture that God ever brought publick Judgements on his people, but the ſins of Princes, Prieſts and Prophets were the cauſes of it, and are ſo declared to have been? and therefore we muſt enquire yet further.*

Anſ. 1. This Objection is ſtrange and impertinent, it is as if a Phyſician ſhould come to a perſon all over full of mortal wounds, and yet neglects them all, and ſtrangely cries out, There is one ſingular wound which I muſt finde out: is not this to ſuffer the perſon wilfully to periſh, by letting him bleed out his life at the known wounds, while he goes upon the diſcovery of one unknown? Is not this *New-Englands* [illegible] ſuch as was once *Judahs*, Iſa. 1. 5. and ſhall we yet grope as in the dark after ſome ſingular thing: I therefore fear that this is but a fond and hypocritical excuſe, to put off the edge of the conviction of preſent ſins, and keep up our credit too, as if we would willingly know the minde of God. But

2. Suppoſe there be ſome ſingular ſin: yet

Firſt, It doth not need preſently terminate upon the Magiſtracy and Miniſtry, though wherein they may be wanting in their places, the Lord give them to ſee & reform it, but it is not my work to ſcandalize thoſe who cannot hear me ſpeak: yet I ſay the ſin is not needfully theirs. But

1. It may be univerſal, a ſpreading and over-running diſtemper. It is true indeed, God ſometimes ſpeaks to theſe, *For your ſakes they ſhall go into captivity*, but if we be wiſe and compare Scripture, we ſhall elſwhere hear God ſaying, *My people would have it ſo*: there is a concurrence, a delight in it.

2. It

2. It may be a sin which Magistrates and Ministers would fain reform, but we will not be reformed: our Form of Government both in Church and Commonwealth, is partly *Democratical*, whose corruption and degeneracy being *Anarchy*, the guilt of the errours of Administration fall upon the people, especially if persons in Office and Place do their endeavour to rectifie and amend them, but are overpowered; nay, though they attain an outward Reformation, yet there may remain the guilt of that sin unrepented of upon a Land, which God will not forget, but (though he may delay for a while) will finde out a time to call to reckoning. *Josiah* was the greatest Reformer in *Judah* that ever was, yet though there were peace in his time, &c. Reade 2 *Kings* 22.15. & 23.25,26.

3. Consider (though I speak not to excuse sin in any, where they may be guilty before God) yet consider why hath God lately taken away so many of his precious Servants in the Ministry, it is not to their damage or wrong, they are gone to their rest, have left a sinful and sorrowful world, to be invested with a Crown of Glory, and to be with Christ, which is best: but we are bereaved, the Lights are put out of our Candlesticks; they were despised here, and they are now received to honour and glory: and this may call us to solemn consideration. Consider *Isa.* 57.1——

Secondly, Be it a singular sin, and let it center where it will, it seems we are to seek about it; I tell you, the way to know it, is to reform what we do know. God reveals himself by degrees to a people, according to their improvement. God hath told us of these and those things; why should he discover any more, since we mend not, but make so ill use of what he hath discovered. Let me tell you, and I can assure you of it to be a truth, prove it, and you shall have experience of it, If we repent from our hearts of our known sins, God will either remove the stroke off from us, or further discover what is provoking to him.

Return, come.] *Verba festinantes.* The words

1. Contain a general duty: this duty is a serious Repentance, implied in both words put together. *Return.* *Esau* went out from the Church, despised the Priviledges of it, his Posterity here is called upon to come back again. *Come*; *i.e.* Come to God, to him from whom you went away in that Apostacy: which two are true Repentance, A turning away from sin, & going to God.

2. They imply a thorough Repentance, both words laid together; Forsake sin, and cleave unto God, this is a whole work.

3. They imply a speedy Repentance, *Return, come.* God is at a word with them, if they will; let them make haste. Hence, to sum up all in one, observe this

Doct. *When God begins to visit a sinning people for their sins, he expects a thorough and speedy Repentance.*

In the Doctrine there are three things:

1. God *now* expects Repentance: he promiseth himself such an effect, *Isa.*26 9. hence he calls for it, *Jer.*26.12,13.

2. God expects *a thorough Repentance*, it is no halving of it with God, when once he hath taken the rod into his hand, *Jer.*4.1.

3. God expects *a speedy Repentance*, God is in haste, and so must we, *ibid.*

*Reas.*1. Of the the first, From Gods merciful Nature, who had rather sinners should repent and live, *Ezek.*36.11. he had rather spare then destroy, but it must be so as his Honour may not be wronged, which is near and precious to him, and therefore it must be by giving glory to him in a way of Repentance. Hence God when he hath begun, useth delayes, and moves slowly in bringing his Judgements.

*Reas.*2. Of the second, Because partial Repentance is but a mockery: We owe God all, and therefore in every thing wherein we have offended him, we ought to repent and return, and seek to make it up. He that doth not repent seriously of every sin, doth not repent truly of any sin; he that doth not return unto God, doth not in truth turn away from his sin; a half repentance therefore is no repentance at all.

*Reas.*3. Of the third:

1. Because this is the last means, and therefore if this do it not, what hopes are there remaining of such a peoples Reformation. God takes not the Rod in his hand till he be enforced to it, *Lam.*3.37. he useth all other means first, Convictions, Reproofs, Warnings, Threatnings, and waits to see if these will not reach his ends, and work repentance; when all these fail, then he begins to afflict a people: now if this will not effect it, nothing will, such a people are beyond hopes obstinate in rebellion, whom Judgements will not awaken to repentance, and therefore God hath little encouragement to use any long delayes with such a people.

2. Because God delayes till he be indeed provoked, and therefore

there

there is need to make haste. God in this exalts his Patience to wait a long time upon a rebellious people, but if Patience be worn out, we had need have a care now to our selves, *Isa.* 27. 4.

Vse. Here we see what is our work to day: God hath begun and made an entrance, and hath been bringing of us on to a stage of Judgements, I need not mention the particulars wherein his hand hath been out against us. Here you see what God expects at our hands.

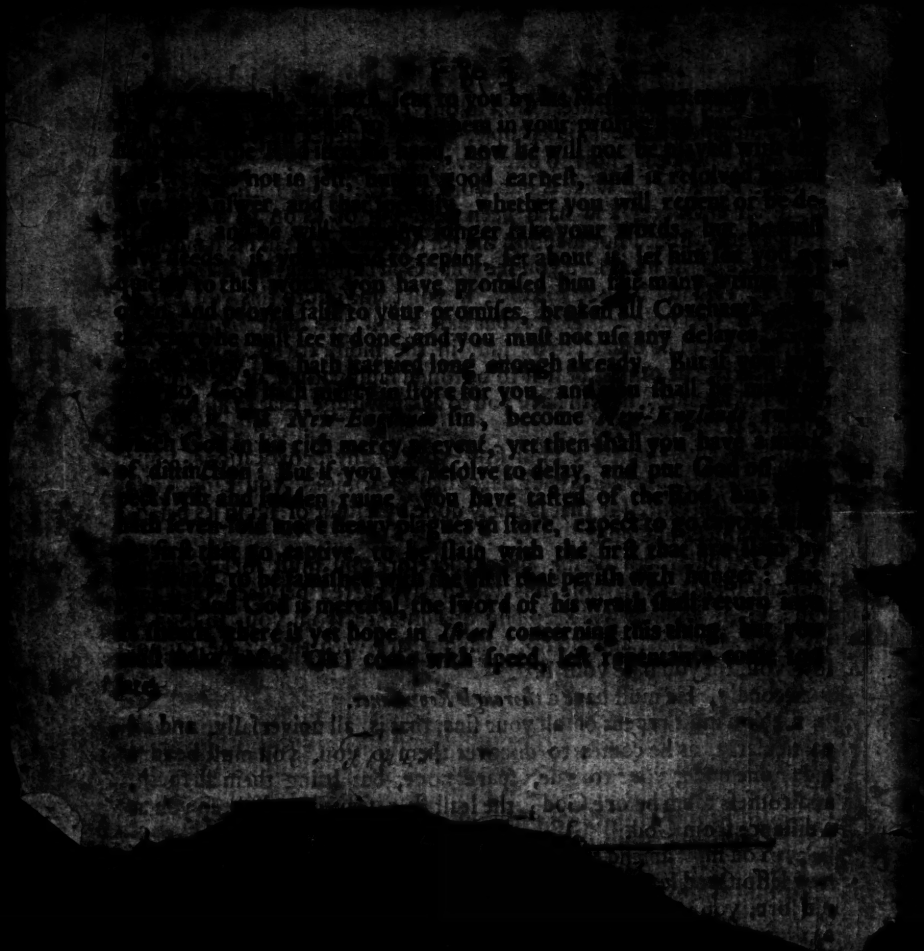
First, He must have *Repentance*, if you come not to this you do nothing; if you only *confess*, it is but half a Fast, you must *forsake* too.

1. God will be owned to be just, in the most retired thoughts of your hearts, he cannot bear it to be found fault with, or be thought to do any wrong; he will have you to acknowledge, that in all he hath done, he is righteous.

2. Hence you must see your sins, your many provocations, your Covenant-breakings, and your particular enormities, you cannot else justifie God aright, for that is onely done by a sight of sin in its being, its hainousness and guilt.

3. God punisheth for sin, hence therefore you must forsake them, you must part with those sins which have parted between God and you: Gods holiness will keep him at a distance from you, so long as you keep your sins, and do not willingly part with them; he cannot love you, till you hate your sins.

Secondly, He must have a *thorough Repentance.*

1. You must repent of all your sins, that is, all universally, and all particularly, as he comes to discover them to you, you must be sure hide none under your tongue, spare none, but bring them all forth and confess them before God, the least [illegible] a distance from God.

2. You must amend [illegible] new lesson, and le[illegible] old sore, you [illegible] as ey[illegible]